The Summer of the Ubume

& KYOUGOKU NATSUHIKO
SHIMIZU AKI

ひまがない
& TRANSLATION TYPESETTING SANA

...2nd, 1950 (Sunday)
Cloudy with occasional sun
finally spoke with my wife
aims to remember nothing
ident. Has she truely forg
hiding something from me,
any case, I must find out
ppened to the child. I he
inkakuji Temple in Kyoto w
oyed by fire. They're sayi
t was arson.

, 1950 (Monday)
es, cloudy in the afternoon.
ubmitted the marriage docu
ow on, I'll no longer be "Fuj
," but rather "Kuonji Makio
ot been able to find out an
ut the matter that's been
aven't even had a chance to
still can't believe that I mad
errible mistake without even

CHAPTER 4

January 8th, 1951 (Monday)
Clear, with mist in the afternoon.

My research is almost complete. Although the child is surely dead by now, perhaps I can still bring some hope to my wife and her family. Though some may object to what they see as a violation of natural laws, I feel that my research will benefit soldiers who have been wounded in battle like myself. I only wish to spare my dear wife from humiliation. Perhaps this good news will ease her madness...

THIS IS THE LAST ENTRY, RIGHT?

to tell her tonight. how she will react?

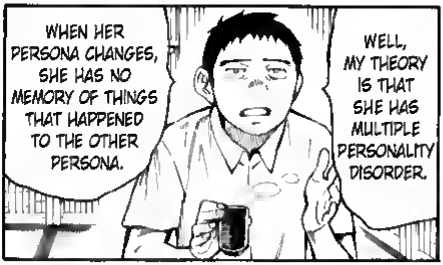
I'M MORE INTERESTED IN HIS DESCRIPTIONS OF THE WEATHER.
LOOK, IN THIS ONE HE WROTE THAT THERE WAS MIST IN THE AFTERNOON.
IF I REMEMBER CORRECTLY, IT WAS MISTY UNTIL THE NEXT MORNING.
WHEN HE TALKS ABOUT A "VIOLATION OF NATURAL LAWS," I WONDER IF HE MEANS THE HOMUNCULUS?
HM...
AND WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH HELPING INJURED SOLDIERS?
BUT WHO WOULD OPEN THE WINDOW ON A COLD, MISTY JANUARY NIGHT?
THERE'S NO WAY HE COULD HAVE HEARD THEM FROM THE NEXT BUILDING OVER.
WELL, NAITOU SAID THAT HE COULD HEAR THE COUPLE ARGUING ON THE NIGHT OF THE DISAPPEARANCE.
YOU CAN REMEMBER THAT?
Huh?
ACCORDING TO ENOKIZU, NAITOU AND KYOUKO WERE IN BED TOGETHER THAT NIGHT.
SO THAT MEANS...

AND THEN...
THE HUSBAND WALKED IN.

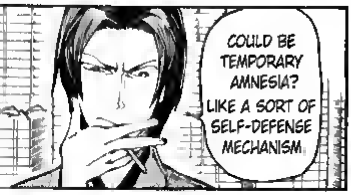
.....

"I MADE SUCH A TERRIBLE MISTAKE ..."
"THE CHILD IS SURELY DEAD ..."

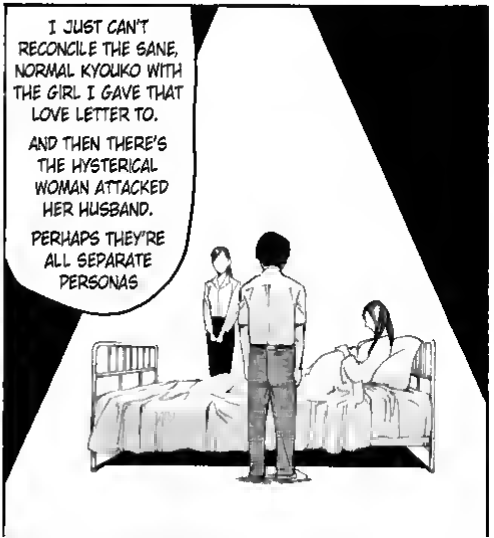
IF ANYTHING, IT SEEMS AS IF HE WANTS TO MAKE AMENDS FOR SOMETHING
BUT HIS TONE ISN'T RESENTFUL.


WHEN HER PERSONA CHANGES, SHE HAS NO MEMORY OF THINGS THAT HAPPENED TO THE OTHER PERSONA.
WELL, MY THEORY IS THAT SHE HAS MULTIPLE PERSONALITY DISORDER.

...ANYHOW, SEKIGUCHI, WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT KYOUKO GIRL'S STRANGE LAPSES IN MEMORY?


COULD BE TEMPORARY AMNESIA? LIKE A SORT OF SELF-DEFENSE MECHANISM.

SHOUT
BUT EVEN WHILE I WAS TALKING TO HER, IT SEEMED AS IF HER PERSONALITY CHANGED!


I JUST CAN'T RECONCILE THE SANE, NORMAL KYOUKO WITH THE GIRL I GAVE THAT LOVE LETTER TO.
AND THEN THERE'S THE HYSTERICAL WOMAN ATTACKED HER HUSBAND.
PERHAPS THEY'RE ALL SEPARATE PERSONAS

THE SYMPTOMS OF OVERDOSE INCLUDE LACK OF RESPONSE TO STIMULI, DELUSIONS AND HALLUCINATIONS, AGITATION AND UNINTELLIGIBLE SPEECH...
PSYCHOTROPIC ALKALOIDS, RIGHT?
SCOPOLAMINE, HYOCYAMINE, ATROPINE...
YOU MENTIONED THAT THERE WERE DATURA GROWING IN THE GARDEN...
DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S IN THOSE FLOWERS?
GASP

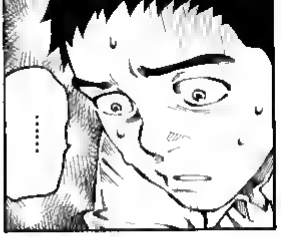
ARE YOU SUGGESTING THAT RYOUKO-SAN... IS USING DATURA TO DRUG HER OWN SISTER...?
WAIT, KYOUGOKU-DOU...

PLEASE... SAVE ME...

SHE'S BEEN TENDING THOSE FLOWERS, RIGHT?

YOU'RE RIGHT...

WHAT A RIDICULOUS IDEA.
THE ALCHEMISTS OF ANCIENT TIMES CLAIMED THAT YOU COULD CREATE A HOMUNCULUS BY PUTTING A MAN'S SEMEN IN A SEALED GLASS JAR AND INCUBATING IT USING THE BODY HEAT OF A HORSE.
A TINY HUMAN WOULD GROW INSIDE THE JAR, NOURISHED BY FRESH BLOOD.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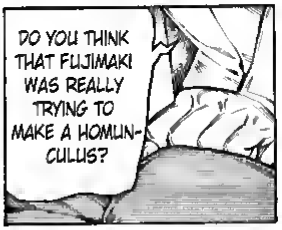
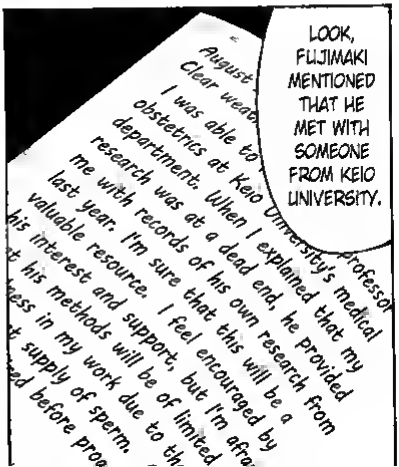
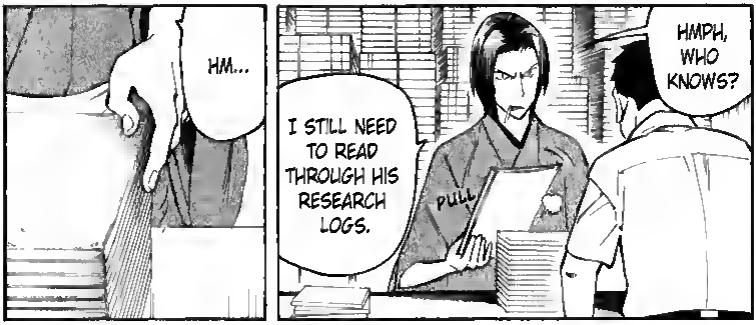
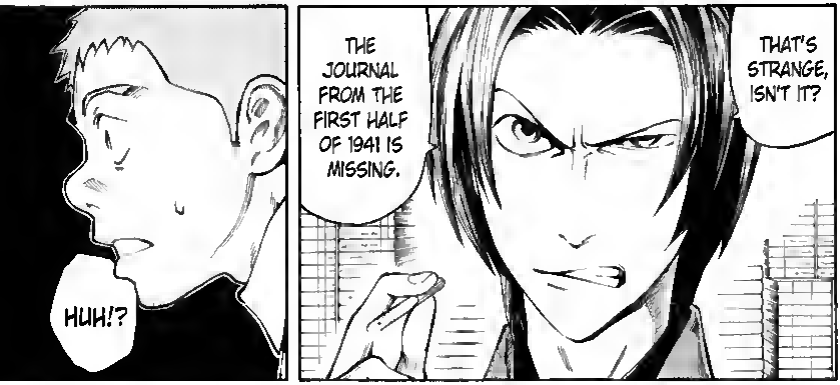

DO YOU THINK THAT FUJIMAKI WAS REALLY TRYING TO MAKE A HOMUNCULUS?

AHA!
BUT EVEN WITH ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION, CONCEPTION IS STILL FUNDAMENTALLY A NATURAL PROCESS...
FLIP
FLIP
I BELIEVE THAT WAS THE YEAR BEFORE LAST.
HM, WELL, THEY DID CONDUCT EXPERIMENTS IN ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION AT KEIO UNIVERSITY...

SO HE WAS TRYING TO MAKE A HOMUNCULUS!?


LOOK, FUJIMAKI MENTIONED THAT HE MET WITH SOMEONE FROM KEIO UNIVERSITY.
August
Clear weat
I was able to
obstetrics at Keio University's medical department. When I explained that my research was at a dead end, he provided me with records of his own research from last year. I'm sure that this will be a valuable resource. I feel encouraged by his interest and support, but I'm afra
t his methods will be of limited
ess in my work due to th
supply of sperm.
ed before proc


HM...
I STILL NEED TO READ THROUGH HIS RESEARCH LOGS.
PULL
HMPH, WHO KNOWS?


HUH!?
THE JOURNAL FROM THE FIRST HALF OF 1941 IS MISSING.
THAT'S STRANGE, ISN'T IT?

.....!!
PERHAPS SOMEONE STOLE IT.
DIDN'T YOU MENTION THAT THE STRING ON THE BUNDLE WAS LOOSE?
THAT'S ODD. I THOUGHT WE TOOK ALL OF THEM.

Kyouko had, of course, and the hospital director...
But most of them hadn't even met Fujimaki ten years ago.

...BUT WHO?

SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T WANT US TO READ IT, OBVIOUSLY.

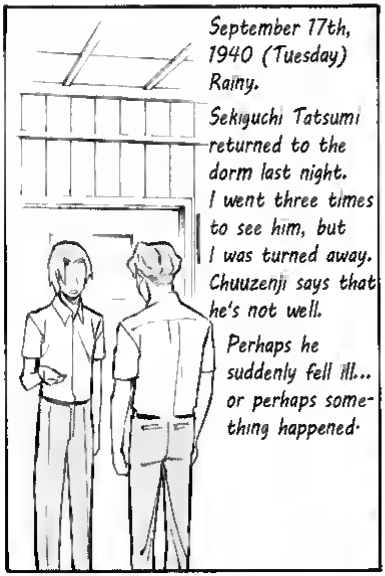
I WANT TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED IN THAT TIME.
AND HE WENT TO GERMANY THE YEAR AFTER THAT, IN APRIL OF 1941.
YOU DELIVERED THE LOVE LETTER ON THE 16TH OF SEPTEMBER, 1940.

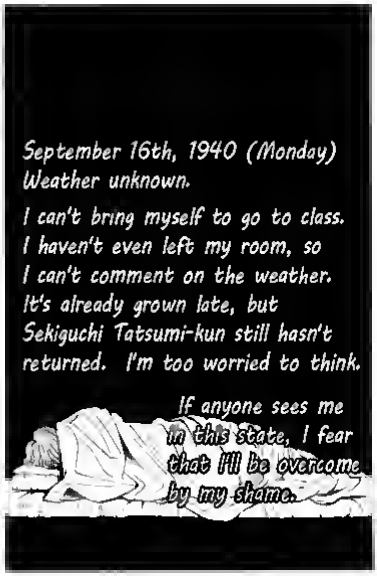
YOU WERE OBVIOUSLY DISTURBED AFTER YOU DELIVERED THAT LETTER.
YOU DIDN'T COME BACK TO THE DORM UNTIL ALMOST MIDNIGHT, AND YOU LOCKED YOURSELF IN YOUR ROOM FOR TWO WEEKS AFTER THAT.
YOU WOULDN'T EVEN COME OUT FOR MEALS, SO ENOKIZU AND I HAD TO FORCE YOU TO EAT.

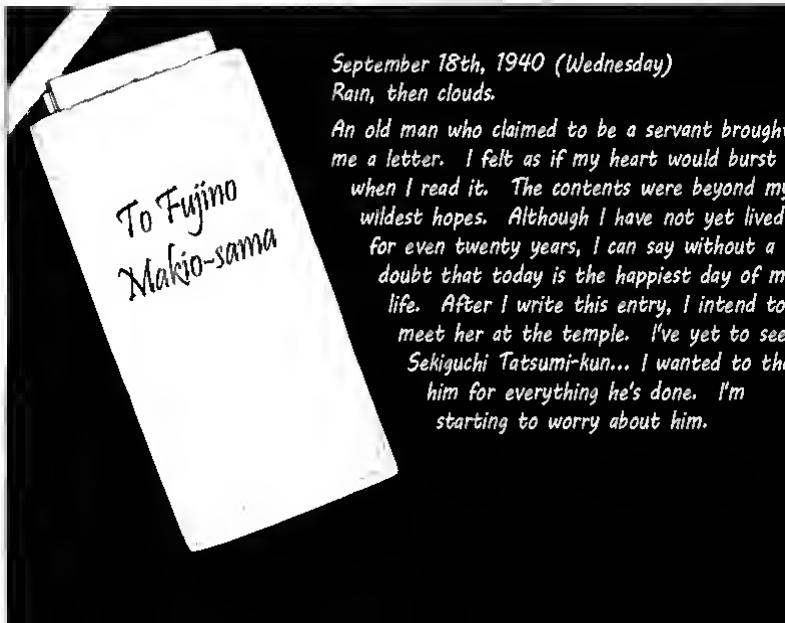
...HOW CAN YOU REMEMBER ALL THAT!?
I WAS THE ONE WHO DELIVERED THE LETTER, AND EVEN I FORGOT!
IT'S PSYCHO-GENIC AMNESIA, MOST LIKELY.

September 15th, 1940 (Sunday)
Cloudy, then clear.

I can't stop worrying. On the advice of Chuuzenji Akihiko-kun, I put all of my feelings into a letter... but I lack the courage to deliver it. Now my hopes and dreams rest in the hands of Sekiguchi Tatsumi-kun.

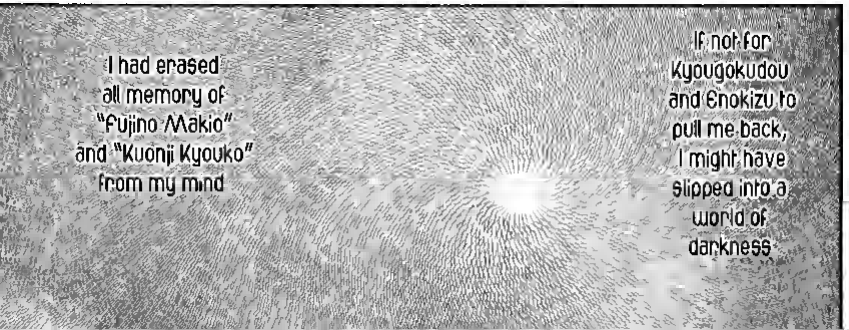

September 17th, 1940 (Tuesday)
Rainy.
Sekiguchi Tatsumi returned to the dorm last night. I went three times to see him, but I was turned away. Chuuzenji says that he's not well.
Perhaps he suddenly fell ill... or perhaps something happened.

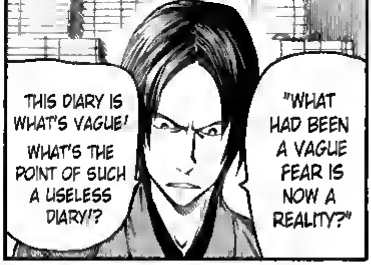

September 16th, 1940 (Monday)
Weather unknown.
I can't bring myself to go to class. I haven't even left my room, so I can't comment on the weather. It's already grown late, but Sekiguchi Tatsumi-kun still hasn't returned. I'm too worried to think.
If anyone sees me in this state, I fear that I'll be overcome by my shame.


To Fujino Makio-sama
September 18th, 1940 (Wednesday)
Rain, then clouds.
An old man who claimed to be a servant brought me a letter. I felt as if my heart would burst when I read it. The contents were beyond my wildest hopes. Although I have not yet lived for even twenty years, I can say without a doubt that today is the happiest day of my life. After I write this entry, I intend to meet her at the temple. I've yet to see Sekiguchi Tatsumi-kun... I wanted to thank him for everything he's done. I'm starting to worry about him.

AFTER THAT FIRST MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 18TH, IT SEEMS THAT HE MET WITH HER SEVERAL MORE TIMES.
IT'S ALL HE TALKS ABOUT.
WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE HE GOT THE RESPONSE HE WAS HOPING FOR.
YOU REALLY PLAYED THE ROLE OF CUPID, DIDN'T YOU?
AH, WELL, HE DOES MENTION THAT HE REGRETTED NOT BEING ABLE TO THANK YOU.

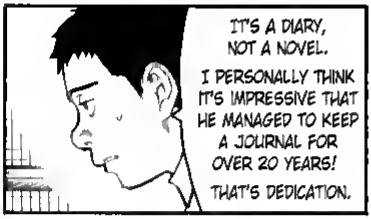
And then I heard that he'd left for Germany...
That's right...
I refused to see him... I was afraid to see him.

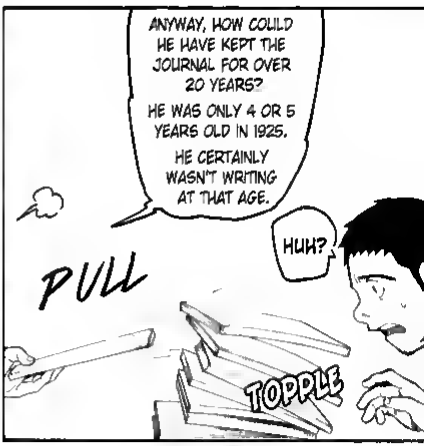

I had erased all memory of "Fujino Makio" and "Kuonji Kyouko" from my mind
If not for Kyougokudou and Enokizu to pull me back, I might have slipped into a world of darkness



December 31st, 1940 (Tuesday)
Clear skies.

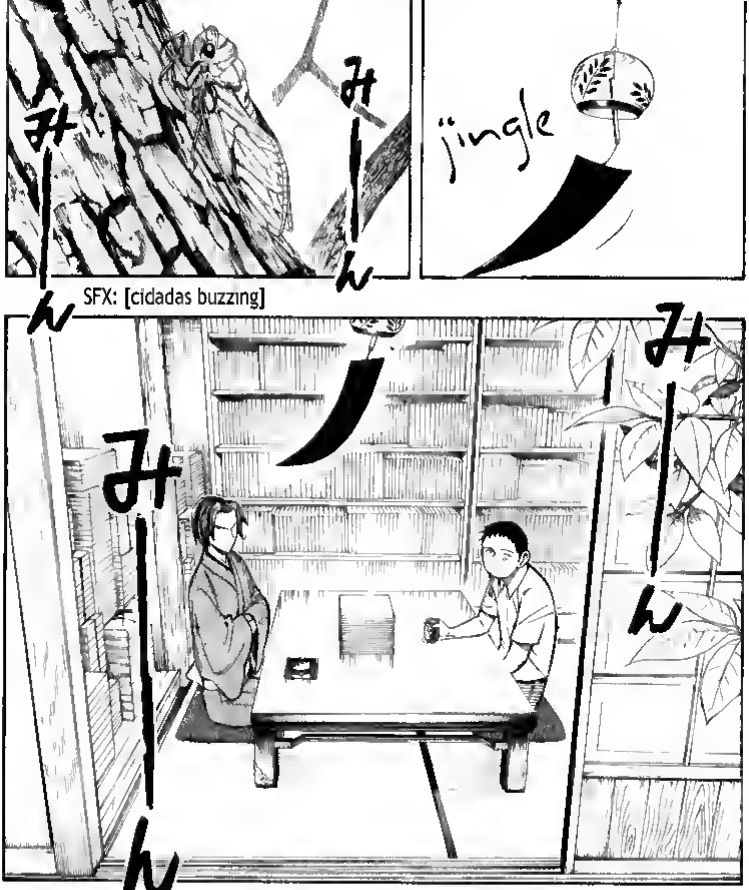
With no home to return to,
I'll have to welcome the new year alone
in my dormitory. A letter arrived this
afternoon. What had been a vague fea
now a reality. I don't even know how
begin to handle this situation. I'm too
whelmed by anxiety to think straight.
wish that I could just disappear.


IT'S A DIARY, NOT A NOVEL.
I PERSONALLY THINK IT'S IMPRESSIVE THAT HE MANAGED TO KEEP A JOURNAL FOR OVER 20 YEARS!
THAT'S DEDICATION.


ANYWAY, HOW COULD HE HAVE KEPT THE JOURNAL FOR OVER 20 YEARS?
HE WAS ONLY 4 OR 5 YEARS OLD IN 1925.
HE CERTAINLY WASN'T WRITING AT THAT AGE.
HUH?
PULL
TOPPLE

I WANT TO KNOW WHAT FUJIMAKI WAS DOING FROM 1940 TO 1941!
I DON'T CARE ABOUT THIS CRAP.
FLIP
FLIP
FLIP
THIS DIARY BELONGS TO FUJIMAKI'S MOTHER!
WHAT THE...
HM.
SHE MUST HAVE STARTED THE DIARY TO RECORD YOUNG FUJIMAKI'S CHILDHOOD.
BUT HIS MOTHER DIED IN 1933... SO HE MUST HAVE DECIDED TO CONTINUE IT IN HER MEMORY.
AND THEN HE KEPT IT UP FOR ANOTHER 18 YEARS.
IS THAT... ONE OF THE KUONJIS?
...Could it be Kuonji Ryouko?
FLUTTER

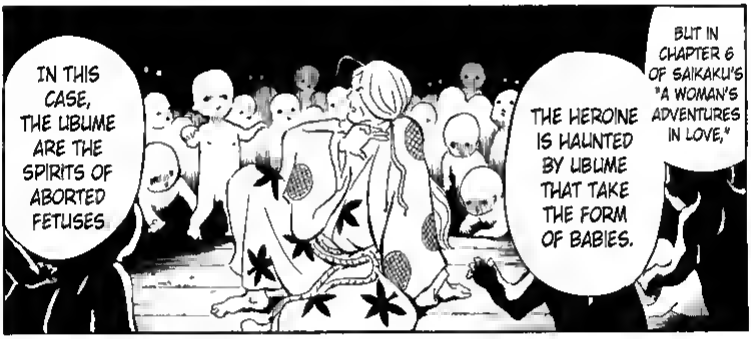
NO... NOT REALLY...
THERE'S JUST SOMETHING ABOUT HER THAT REMINDS ME OF THEM.
HM? I ASSUME THAT SHE'S FUJIMAKI'S MOTHER.
YOU THINK SHE LOOKS LIKE THOSE KUONJI GIRLS?
WELL, THEY'RE IDENTICAL TWINS... SO SHE RESEMBLES BOTH OF THEM, I GUESS.
HUH. WHICH ONE OF THEM DOES SHE LOOK LIKE?
HM... I KNOW THE DEATH OF HIS MOTHER HIT FUJIMAKI HARD.
AND HE LOST HIS FATHER AT A YOUNG AGE, TOO...
MAYBE HE WAS LOOKING FOR HIS MOTHER IN KUONJI KYOUKO.

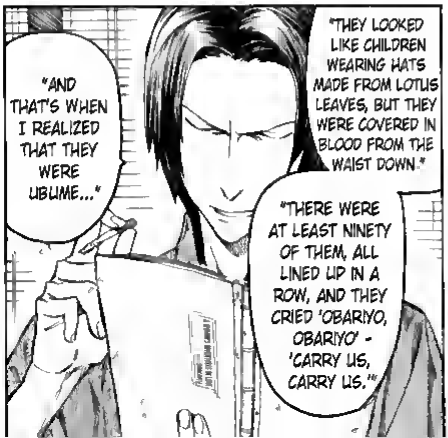

みーん
jingle
SFX: [cidadas buzzing]
みーん
みーん
みーん

IT SEEMS THAT THESE CHILD-STEALING DEMONS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH BIRDS DUE TO THE BIRD-LIKE SOUND OF THEIR CRY.
THERE'S A FOLK TALE FROM HITACHI ABOUT A MONSTROUS BIRD CALLED THE "UBUME-DORI" THAT COMES IN THE NIGHT TO POISON THE CLOTHING OF INFANTS...
RATHER SIMILAR TO THE CHINESE "KOKA-KUCHOU" STORY, ISN'T IT?
DO YOU REMEMBER OUR TALK ABOUT UBUME?

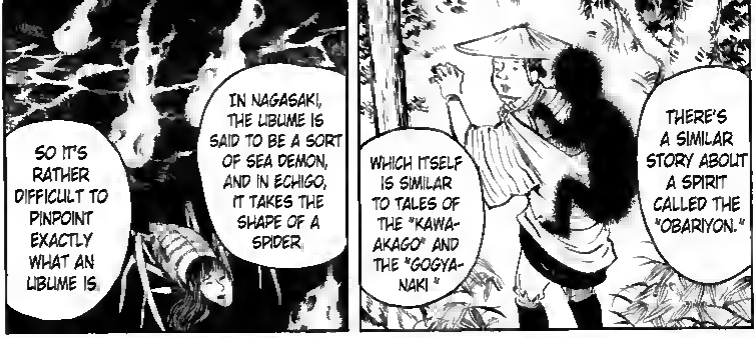
A WOMAN'S ADVENTURES IN LOVE
BY SAIKAKU
BUT IT REALLY DOESN'T MAKE MUCH SENSE.
YOU'D USUALLY THINK OF A BABY CRYING, NOT THE MOTHER, RIGHT?
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT TOO, AT FIRST...

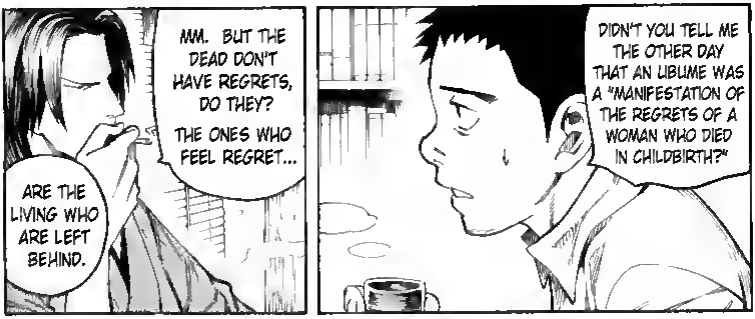
IN "ONE HUNDRED STORIES FROM VARIOUS LANDS," THERE'S A TALE OF A VILLAGE WHERE PEOPLE HEAR A WAILING SOUND AT NIGHT AND MISTAKE IT FOR AN UBUME WHEN IT'S REALLY JUST THE CRY OF A BLUE HERON


BUT IN CHAPTER 6 OF SAIKAKU'S "A WOMAN'S ADVENTURES IN LOVE,"
THE HEROINE IS HAUNTED BY UBUME THAT TAKE THE FORM OF BABIES.
IN THIS CASE, THE UBUME ARE THE SPIRITS OF ABORTED FETUSES.

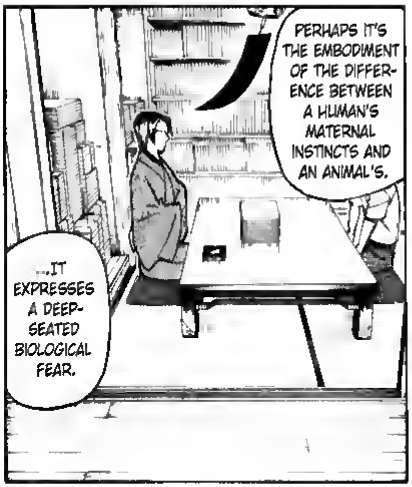

"AND THAT'S WHEN I REALIZED THAT THEY WERE UBUME..."
"THEY LOOKED LIKE CHILDREN WEARING HATS MADE FROM LOTUS LEAVES, BUT THEY WERE COVERED IN BLOOD FROM THE WAIST DOWN."
"THERE WERE AT LEAST NINETY OF THEM, ALL LINED UP IN A ROW, AND THEY CRIED 'OBARIYO, OBARIYO' - 'CARRY US, CARRY US.'"

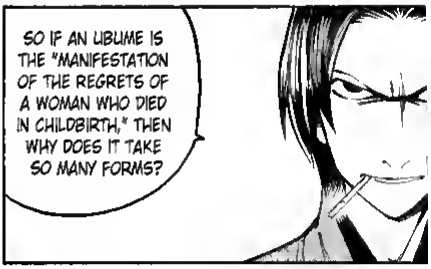
I SAW A BABY... WITH A FROG'S FACE
GASP
!


SO IT'S RATHER DIFFICULT TO PINPOINT EXACTLY WHAT AN UBUME IS.
IN NAGASAKI, THE UBUME IS SAID TO BE A SORT OF SEA DEMON, AND IN ECHIGO, IT TAKES THE SHAPE OF A SPIDER.
WHICH ITSELF IS SIMILAR TO TALES OF THE "KAWA-AKAGO" AND THE "GOGYA-NAKI."
THERE'S A SIMILAR STORY ABOUT A SPIRIT CALLED THE "OBARIYON."


ARE THE LIVING WHO ARE LEFT BEHIND.
MM. BUT THE DEAD DON'T HAVE REGRETS, DO THEY?
THE ONES WHO FEEL REGRET...
DIDN'T YOU TELL ME THE OTHER DAY THAT AN UBUME WAS A "MANIFESTATION OF THE REGRETS OF A WOMAN WHO DIED IN CHILDBIRTH?"

AN UBUME THAT IS HEARD BUT NOT SEEN IS A BIRD.
SO A MAN MIGHT SEE AN UBUME AS A WOMAN,
AND A WOMAN MIGHT SEE IT AS A CHILD.
BUT ALL OF THESE ARE STILL RECOGNIZED AS BEING THE SAME THING.
SO IN OTHER WORDS, THE ONE WHO DETERMINES THE SHAPE OF A GHOST IS THE LIVING PERSON WHO SEES IT.


PERHAPS IT'S THE EMBODIMENT OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A HUMAN'S MATERNAL INSTINCTS AND AN ANIMAL'S.
...IT EXPRESSES A DEEP-SEATED BIOLOGICAL FEAR.

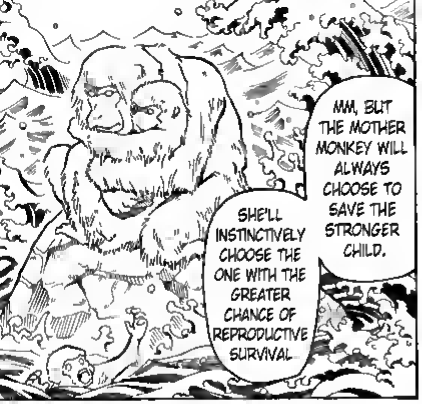

SO IF AN UBUME IS THE "MANIFESTATION OF THE REGRETS OF A WOMAN WHO DIED IN CHILDBIRTH," THEN WHY DOES IT TAKE SO MANY FORMS?

I... I DON'T KNOW.
THEN WHAT IS AN UBUME?

AN OLD MOTHER MONKEY AND HER TWO CHILDREN ARE CAUGHT IN A STORM.
THE THREE OF THEM FALL INTO A RIVER AND ARE SWEPT AWAY.
THE OLDER CHILD CAN SWIM ON ITS OWN, BUT THE OTHER IS ONLY A BABY.
THE CURRENT IS SO STRONG THAT THE MOTHER CAN ONLY SAVE ONE OF HER CHILDREN.

HAVE YOU HEARD THE STORY OF THE THREE MONKEYS?

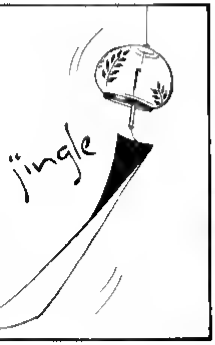
NO... WHAT KIND OF STORY IS THAT?


MM, BUT THE MOTHER MONKEY WILL ALWAYS CHOOSE TO SAVE THE STRONGER CHILD.
SHE'LL INSTINCTIVELY CHOOSE THE ONE WITH THE GREATER CHANCE OF REPRODUCTIVE SURVIVAL

IF YOU WERE THE MOTHER, WHICH CHILD WOULD YOU CHOOSE?
I GUESS I'D PICK THE BABY. THE OTHER CHILD CAN SWIM, RIGHT?

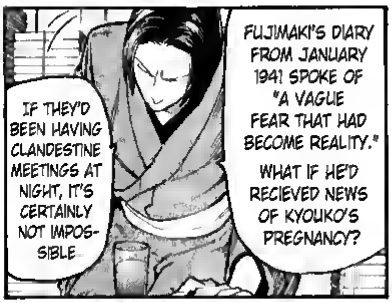
SO... IF LIVING THINGS EXIST ONLY TO PRESERVE THE SPECIES, THEN... DOES THAT MEAN THERE'S NO MEANING TO LIFE?

BUT WE HUMANS ARE MOTIVATED BY MORE THAN JUST THE PRESERVATION OF OUR SPECIES
YOU CAN ATTRIBUTE THAT TO KNOWLEDGE, OR TO HUMANISM, OR TO ARROGANCE. BUT WHATEVER THE REASON WE'VE CREATED A DIFFERENT SET OF VALUES FOR OURSELVES


jingle

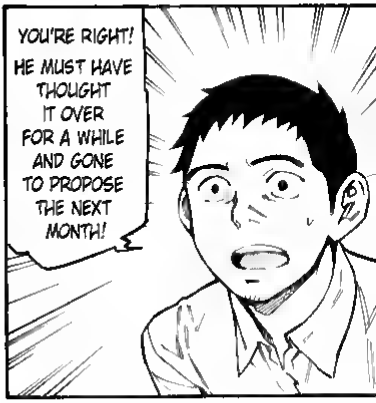
YOU'RE RIGHT.
THERE'S NO MEANING. OR RATHER... THE MEANING HAS BEEN LOST.

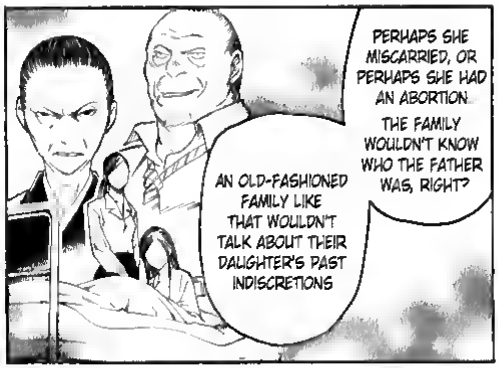
ALL THIS TALK OF UBUME HAS GOT ME THINKING...

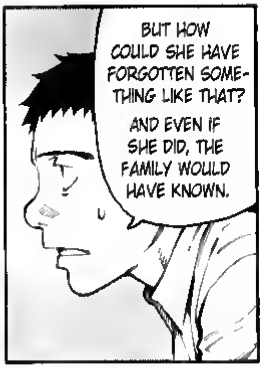

IF THEY'D BEEN HAVING CLANDESTINE MEETINGS AT NIGHT, IT'S CERTAINLY NOT IMPOSSIBLE
FUJIMAKI'S DIARY FROM JANUARY 1941 SPOKE OF "A VAGUE FEAR THAT HAD BECOME REALITY."
WHAT IF HE'D RECIEVED NEWS OF KYOUKO'S PREGNANCY?

WHAT IF KUONJI KYOUKO WAS PREGNANT WITH FUJIMAKI'S CHILD BACK THEN?
WHAT!?

Why are you asking the same thing he asked me!?
How could you possibly know!?
SO WHEN HE WROTE THAT "THE CHILD IS SURELY DEAD BY NOW," HE MUST HAVE MEANT... OH GOD.
AND THEN KYOUKO-SAN CLAIMED TO REMEMBER NOTHING...


YOU'RE RIGHT! HE MUST HAVE THOUGHT IT OVER FOR A WHILE AND GONE TO PROPOSE THE NEXT MONTH!


AN OLD-FASHIONED FAMILY LIKE THAT WOULDN'T TALK ABOUT THEIR DAUGHTER'S PAST INDISCRETIONS
PERHAPS SHE MISCARRIED, OR PERHAPS SHE HAD AN ABORTION.
THE FAMILY WOULDN'T KNOW WHO THE FATHER WAS, RIGHT?


BUT HOW COULD SHE HAVE FORGOTTEN SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
AND EVEN IF SHE DID, THE FAMILY WOULD HAVE KNOWN.

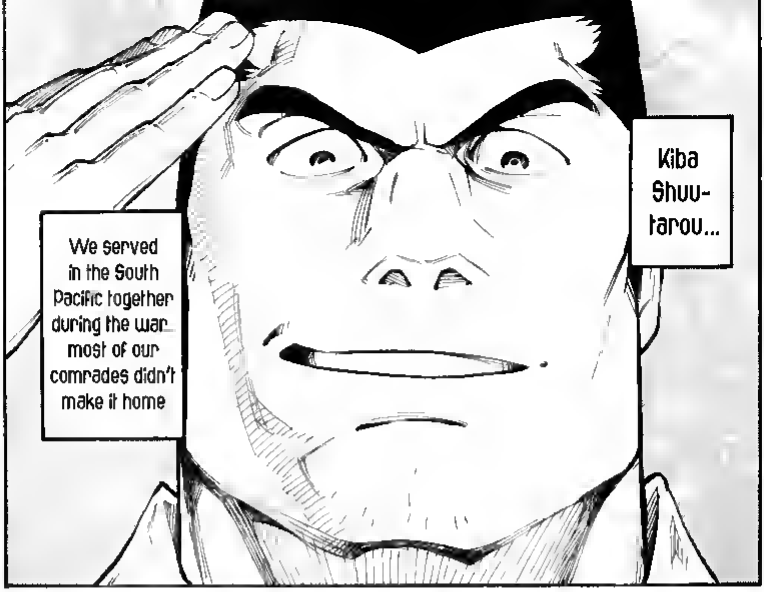
OH MY GOD, IT ALL MAKES SENSE NOW...
THE WOULD HAVE DONE EVERYTHING THEY COULD TO HIDE THEIR DAUGHTER'S SECRET.
AND IT SOUNDS LIKE THEY'D FALLEN ON HARD TIMES - THEY MUST HAVE SEEN FUJIMAKI AS A CHANCE TO RECOVER THEIR FORTUNES.

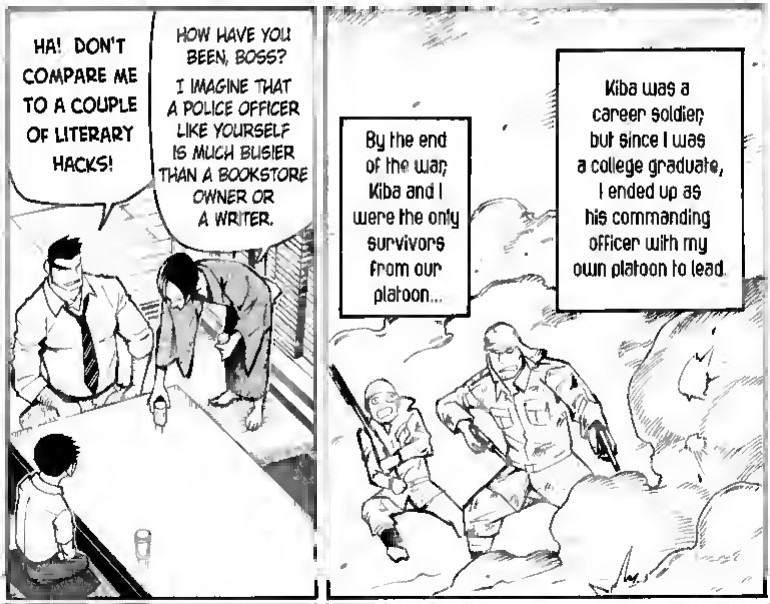
HEY, ARE YOU HOME?
KNOCK KNOCK
KNOCK KNOCK

IS THAT KIBA?

EVEN THOUGH HE BROUGHT ALL THAT MONEY TO THE FAMILY, HE STILL FELT LIKE HE NEEDED TO MAKE AMENDS FOR SOME TERRIBLE MISTAKE...
I DON'T KNOW... IT STILL DOESN'T QUITE ADD UP.
EVEN IF HE KNOCKED THE GIRL UP, HE EVENTUALLY MARRIED HER.
BUT HE STILL SEEMED TROUBLED.

GOOD TO SEE YOU, CAPTAIN SEKIGUCHI!
SERGEANT KIBA REPORTING FOR DUTY, SIR!


Kiba Shuu-tarou...
We served in the South Pacific together during the war most of our comrades didn't make it home


Kiba was a career soldier, but since I was a college graduate, I ended up as his commanding officer with my own platoon to lead.
By the end of the war, Kiba and I were the only survivors from our platoon...
HOW HAVE YOU BEEN, BOSS?
I IMAGINE THAT A POLICE OFFICER LIKE YOURSELF IS MUCH BUSIER THAN A BOOKSTORE OWNER OR A WRITER.
HA! DON'T COMPARE ME TO A COUPLE OF LITERARY HACKS!

SO I FIGURED I'D GO CHECK ON SEKI, BUT HE WASN'T HOME
HIS WIFE SAID I'D PROBABLY FIND HIM HERE, SO HERE I AM

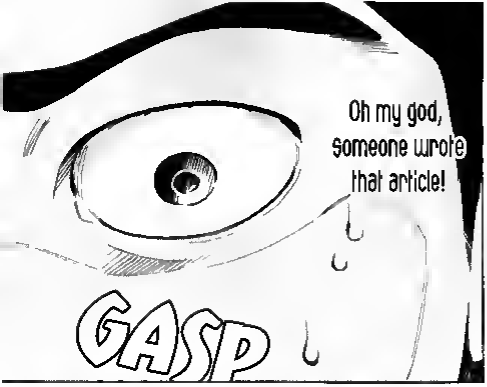
ANYWAY, THAT IDIOT ENOKIZU CALLED ME THIS MORNING
HE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT THAT MONKEY SEKI BEING IN DEEP TROUBLE, AND THAT I HAD TO GO SAVE HIM BEFORE THINGS GOT WORSE
HE WASN'T MAKING MUCH SENSE, BUT FROM WHAT I COULD TELL I THOUGHT IT MIGHT HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THAT KUONJI CLINIC
THAT GUY NEVER MAKES ANY SENSE!

...WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT THIS HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE KUONJIS?

!!

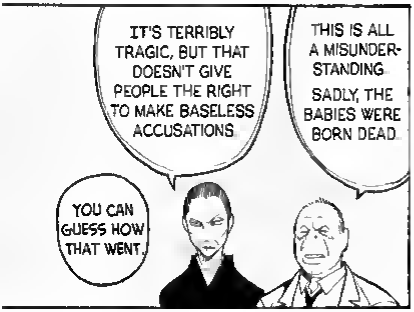
A YEAR AND A HALF AGO, I VISITED THE KUONJI CLINIC TO INVESTIATE A REPORT ABOUT MISSING BABIES.
AND THEN I SAW THAT MAGAZINE AT THE TRAIN STATION, SO I BOUGHT IT

TOSS
TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.
TRUE TALES OF THE WEIRD
TOP STORY
Kishimojin, devourer of babies! What horror grows inside the sex-crazed woman? Is it a demon?
Exclusive reviews of our favorite sex shops!
The hottest photos of the wildest girls!


Oh my god, someone wrote that article!
GASP

TOP STOR
Kishimojin, devourer of babies! What horr
grows inside this sex-crazed woman? Is it a demon?
The hottest photos of the wildest girls!

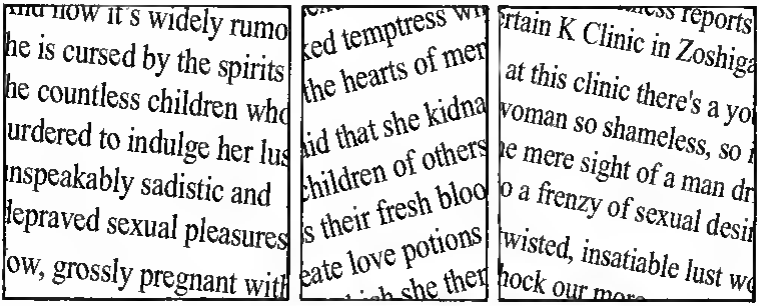
WELL, BOSS, WHAT HAP-PENED WITH THE MISSING CHILDREN?


IT'S TERRIBLY TRAGIC, BUT THAT DOESN'T GIVE PEOPLE THE RIGHT TO MAKE BASELESS ACCUSATIONS.
THIS IS ALL A MISUNDER-STANDING.
SADLY, THE BABIES WERE BORN DEAD.
YOU CAN GUESS HOW THAT WENT.

WELL, IN THE SPACE OF JUST HALF A YEAR, THERE WERE THREE LAWSUITS INVOLVING BABIES WHO DIED RIGHT AFTER BIRTH OR JUST PLAIN DISAPPEARED.
AND ALL AT THE SAME HOSPITAL!
SO NATU-RALLY, I DID SOME DIGGING...

SUSPICIOUS AS FUCK, RIGHT?
I WAS READY TO GET A SEARCH WARRANT AND TAKE THAT HOUSE APART BRICK BY BRICK...

DAMN, I'M STILL PISSED OFF!
I CAN'T INVESTIGATE IF NOBODY'S PRESSING CHARGES.
BUT ALL 3 PLAINTIFFS SUDDENLY DROPPED THEIR CHARGES.
THAT'S EVEN MORE SUSPICIOUS, IF YOU ASK ME!


and how it's widely rumo
he is cursed by the spirits
he countless children who
urdered to indulge her lus
nspeakably sadistic and
lepraved sexual pleasures
ow, grossly pregnant with
ked temptress wi
the hearts of men
aid that she kidna
children of others
s their fresh bloo
eate love potions
rtain K Clinic in Zoshiga
at this clinic there's a yo
woman so shameless, so
he mere sight of a man dr
o a frenzy of sexual desi
twisted, insatiable lust w
hock our more

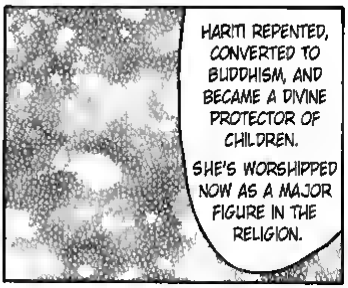
POORLY WRITTEN TRASH.
AND THAT'S ONE OF THE TAMER STORIES.
FLOP
.....
TALES OF THE WEIRD
ved sexual pleasures.
w, grossly pregnant w
demon child, she is tru
rifying sight to behold
regular readers of "Tr
les of the Weird" willl
ubt already know, it's
ell-known fact that an
nusually long pregnan
s an indisputable sign
the child within has be
touched by evil. After
consulted with an esto
expert on folklore an

WELL, ORIGINALLY SHE WAS AN INDIAN GODDESS CALLED "KARITEIMO," ALSO KNOWN AS "HARITI."
HARITI HAD FIVE HUNDRED CHILDREN, BUT EVERY DAY SHE'D TAKE SOMEONE ELSE'S CHILD AND EAT IT.
SO THE BUDDHA STOLE ONE OF HER CHILDREN TO TEACH HER THE PAIN OF LOSING A CHILD.

THERE ARE MORE THAT ARE EVEN WORSE THAN THIS.
WORSE THAN THIS...?

HEY... I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT THE GODDESS KISHIMOJIN WAS THE PROTECTOR OF CHILDREN.
ISN'T SHE SUPPOSED TO BE A GOOD GODDESS?

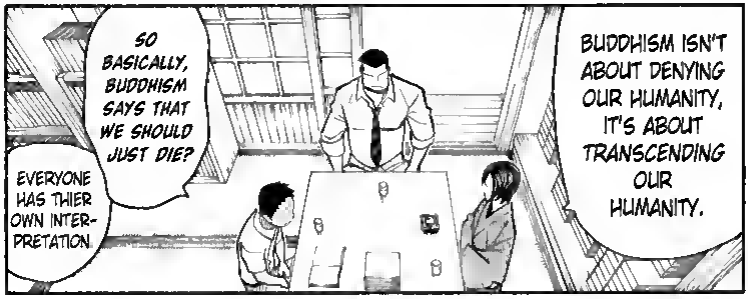
BUDDHISM TEACHES THAT ONE MUST FREE ONESELF FROM ATTACHMENT IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE ENLIGHTENMENT.
LOVE IS MERELY ANOTHER MORTAL ATTACHMENT.
SO THE ORIGINAL MORAL OF KISHIMOJIN'S STORY WAS PROBABLY THAT YOU SHOULDN'T BE TOO ATTACHED TO YOUR CHILDREN.

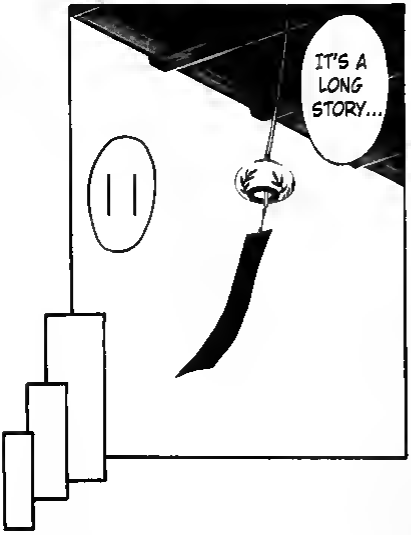

HARITI REPENTED, CONVERTED TO BUDDHISM, AND BECAME A DIVINE PROTECTOR OF CHILDREN.
SHE'S WORSHIPPED NOW AS A MAJOR FIGURE IN THE RELIGION.

SO BUDDHA TAUGHT THIS GODDESS ABOUT A MOTHER'S LOVE, AND NOW SHE'S ONE OF THE GOOD GUYS?
IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE.

BUT AN ANIMAL CAN NEVER BECOME A BUDDHA
YOU CAN'T TRULY BE ENLIGHTENED UNTIL YOU CAN GIVE YOUR ATTACHMENT TO LIFE ITSELF
THAT'S TRUE, ANIMALS AREN'T SO EASILY DISTRACTED

SO WE'RE SUPPOSED TO FORGET ABOUT LOVE!?
IF THAT'S TRUE, THEN MONKEYS ARE CLOSER TO "ENLIGHTENMENT" THAN WE ARE!

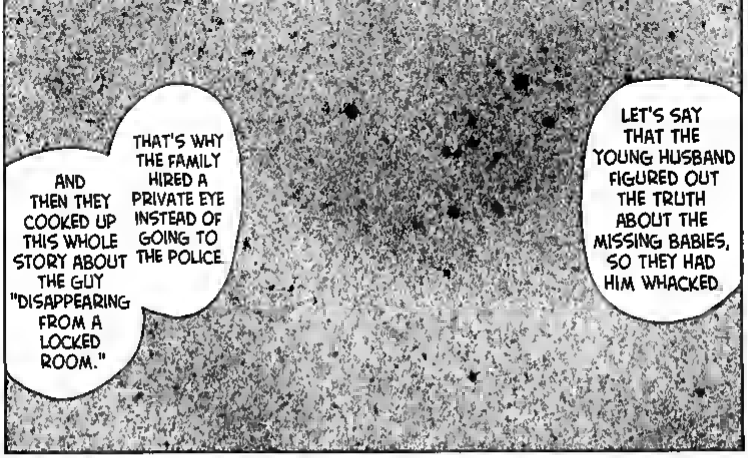

SO BASICALLY, BUDDHISM SAYS THAT WE SHOULD JUST DIE?
EVERYONE HAS THIER OWN INTERPRETATION.
BUDDHISM ISN'T ABOUT DENYING OUR HUMANITY, IT'S ABOUT TRANSCENDING OUR HUMANITY.

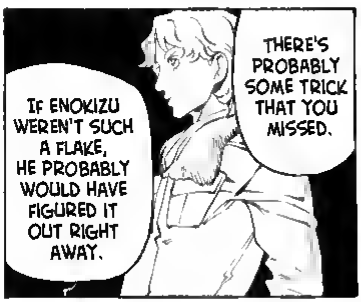

IT'S A LONG STORY...

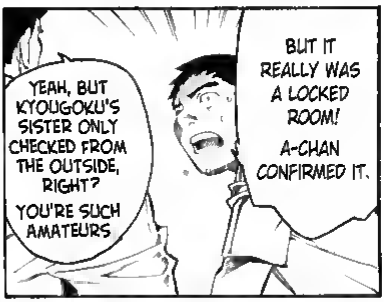
AH, I FORGOT! I ACTUALLY CAME HERE TO ASK YOU ABOUT SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!

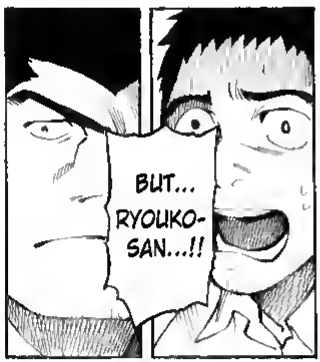
HEY, WHAT SORT OF TROUBLE ARE THE TWO OF YOU MIXED UP IN NOW?

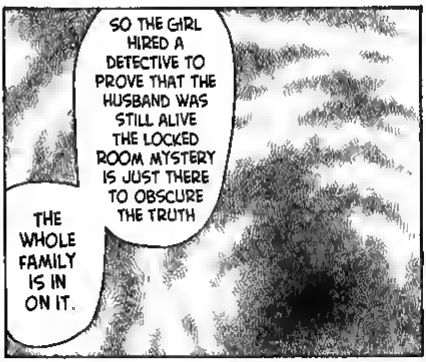
WHAT DO YOU THINK? AFTER ALL, YOU'RE THE PROFESSIONAL DETECTIVE HERE.
HMPH
SO HE VANISHED FROM A LOCKED ROOM, HUH ..?
FINE, HERE'S MY THEORY:
I THINK THE FAMILY IS TRYING TO BLAME THE DEATHS OF ALL THOSE BABIES...
ON THE MISSING SON-IN LAW.
THAT'S ONE HELL OF A THEORY, BOSS!
WHAT !?


LET'S SAY THAT THE YOUNG HUSBAND FIGURED OUT THE TRUTH ABOUT THE MISSING BABIES, SO THEY HAD HIM WHACKED.
THAT'S WHY THE FAMILY HIRED A PRIVATE EYE INSTEAD OF GOING TO THE POLICE.
AND THEN THEY COOKED UP THIS WHOLE STORY ABOUT THE GUY "DISAPPEARING FROM A LOCKED ROOM."

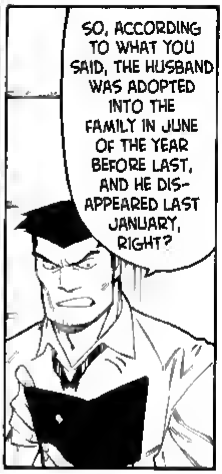

THERE'S PROBABLY SOME TRICK THAT YOU MISSED.
IF ENOKIZU WEREN'T SUCH A FLAKE, HE PROBABLY WOULD HAVE FIGURED IT OUT RIGHT AWAY.


BUT IT REALLY WAS A LOCKED ROOM! A-CHAN CONFIRMED IT.
YEAH, BUT KYOUGOKU'S SISTER ONLY CHECKED FROM THE OUTSIDE, RIGHT? YOU'RE SUCH AMATEURS.


BUT... RYOUKO-SAN...!!

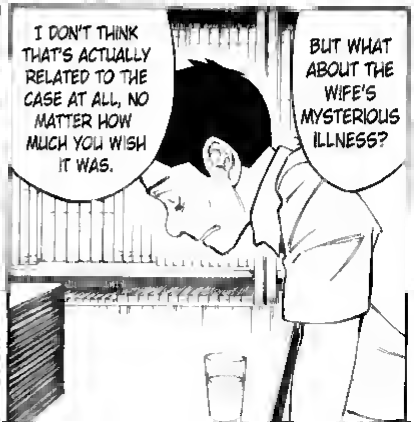

SO THE GIRL HIRED A DETECTIVE TO PROVE THAT THE HUSBAND WAS STILL ALIVE THE LOCKED ROOM MYSTERY IS JUST THERE TO OBSCURE THE TRUTH
THE WHOLE FAMILY IS IN ON IT.

THE FIRST BABY WENT MISSING IN JULY OF THE YEAR BEFORE LAST. THE SECOND WAS IN SEPTEMBER AND THE THIRD WAS IN NOVEMBER


SO, ACCORDING TO WHAT YOU SAID, THE HUSBAND WAS ADOPTED INTO THE FAMILY IN JUNE OF THE YEAR BEFORE LAST, AND HE DISAPPEARED LAST JANUARY, RIGHT?

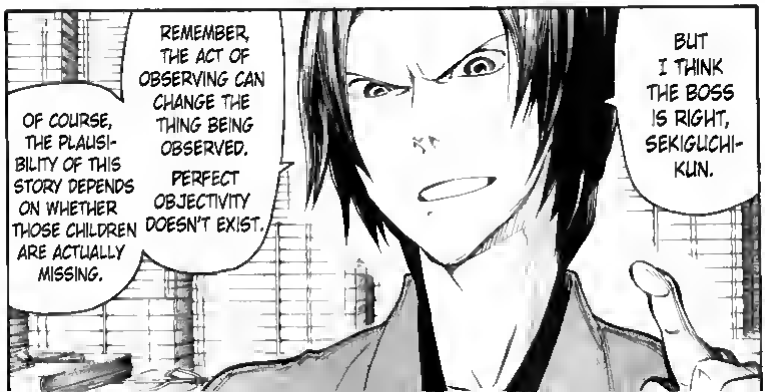
I SEE... WELL, IT DOES SEEM AS IF FUJIMAKI'S DISAPPEARANCE COULD BE RELATED TO THE CASE OF THE MISSING CHILDREN.

There must be something we've missed.
We're overlooking something important...

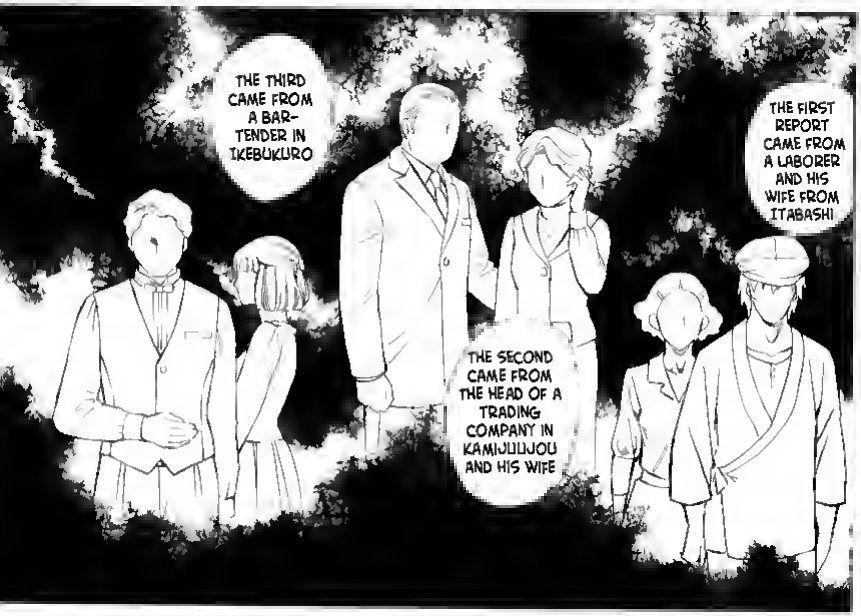

I DON'T THINK THAT'S ACTUALLY RELATED TO THE CASE AT ALL, NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU WISH IT WAS.
BUT WHAT ABOUT THE WIFE'S MYSTERIOUS ILLNESS?

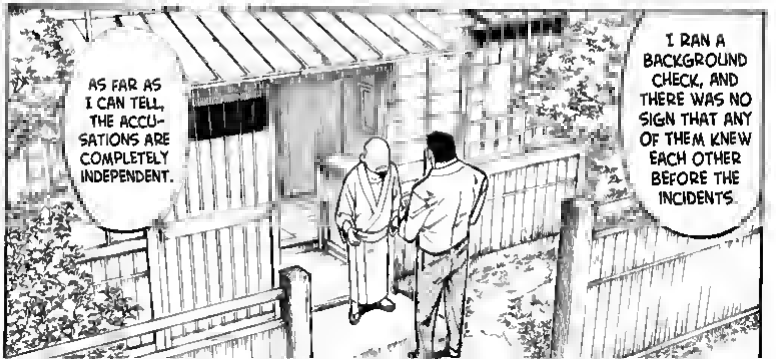
Y-YOU DON'T KNOW THAT...
YOU'RE JUST MAKING WILD GUESSES!
YOU CAN'T RUN AN INVESTIGATION WITHOUT MAKING SOME INFORMED GUESSES.
THE IMPORTANT THING IS THAT YOU FIND THE EVIDENCE TO BACK THEM UP.

GLARE
YOU SOUND LIKE A CROOKED COP.


BUT I THINK THE BOSS IS RIGHT, SEKIGUCHI-KUN.
REMEMBER, THE ACT OF OBSERVING CAN CHANGE THE THING BEING OBSERVED.
PERFECT OBJECTIVITY DOESN'T EXIST.
OF COURSE, THE PLAUSIBILITY OF THIS STORY DEPENDS ON WHETHER THOSE CHILDREN ARE ACTUALLY MISSING.

FIRST, ALL OF THE REPORTS WERE INDEPENDENT - THE PARENTS DIDN'T KNOW EACH OTHER.
AND HERE'S WHY.
THE STORY'S SOLID.


THE THIRD CAME FROM A BAR-TENDER IN IKEBUKURO
THE SECOND CAME FROM THE HEAD OF A TRADING COMPANY IN KAMIJUJIJOU AND HIS WIFE
THE FIRST REPORT CAME FROM A LABORER AND HIS WIFE FROM ITABASHI


AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, THE ACCU-SATIONS ARE COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT.
I RAN A BACKGROUND CHECK, AND THERE WAS NO SIGN THAT ANY OF THEM KNEW EACH OTHER BEFORE THE INCIDENTS.

SUPPOSEDLY, THEY WENT BACK TO THEIR HOMETOWNS... BUT WHEN I TRIED TO TRACK THEM DOWN I COULDN'T FIND ANYTHING.
ALL OF THE NURSES WHO WERE WORKING THERE AT THE TIME SUDDENLY QUIT, AND NOBODY KNOWS WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM.
SECONDLY THE NURSES ARE MISSING TOO

WELL, THIS KIND OF THING IS PROBABLY YOUR SPECIALTY, KYOUGOKU.
AND THIRDLY...

WITH A HISTORY OF HEREDITARY POSSESSION?
HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF A FAMILY...

...ARE THERE RUMORS OF POSSESSION?

YEAH.
I ASKED THE BUREAU DOWN IN KAGAWA TO DO SOME INVESTIGATING INTO THE KUONJI FAMILY'S BACKGROUND FOR ME ..

I WONDER IF HER FAMILY HAS A HISTORY OF SPIRIT POSSESSION

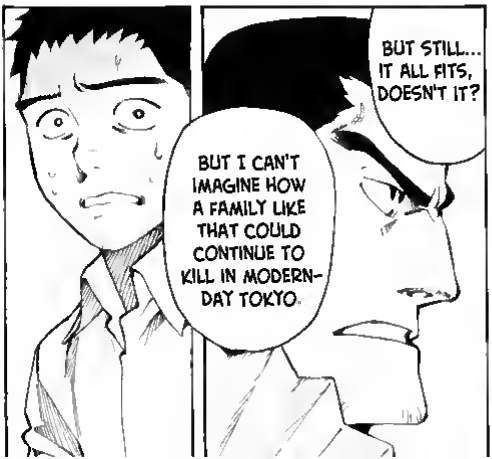
POSSESSED BY WHAT?
APPARENTLY THE KUONJIS WERE OUTCASTS IN THEIR OLD VILLAGE.
PEOPLE THOUGHT THEY WERE POSSESSED
"OSHO-BO?"
BY SOME-THING CALLED AN "OSHOBO "
IS THEIR FAMILY HAUNTED BY A GHOST OR SOMETHING?
SO WHAT IS "HEREDITARY POSSESSION" ANYWAY?
IT'S A SORT OF CHILD-SPIRIT THAT INHABITS A FAMILY'S HOME - IT'S SIMILAR TO A ZASHIKI-WARASHI.
BUT THEY'RE NORMALLY SEEN AS SPIRITS OF GOOD LUCK... AND I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THEM POSSESSING ANYONE
NO... IN THESE CASES, THE FAMILY ISN'T POSSESSED... THEY'RE THE POSSESSORS.
THEY USE SPIRITS TO CURSE OTHERS.
NATURALLY, THIS MAKES THEM VERY UNPOPULAR
IT WOULD CERTAINLY BE TABOO TO MARRY INTO A FAMILY LIKE THAT.

AND THE POSSESSION IS SAID TO BE PASSED FROM MOTHER TO DAUGHTER
NO... BUT THOSE FAMILIES DO TEND TO EXHIBIT SYMPTOMS THAT YOU MIGHT CALL PSYCHOSIS OR NEUROSIS.
SO PEOPLE WHO HAVE A "FAMILY HISTORY OF POSESSION" AREN'T ACTUALLY POSSESSED THEMSELVES?
ACTU-ALLY, IT DOES.
BUT KYOU-GOKUDOU, THIS CAN'T POSSIBLY HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE CASE!
.....!
SUPPOSEDLY, THE SPIRIT THAT THE KUONJIS WERE USING TO CURSE PEOPLE WASN'T A KITSUNE OR A TANUKI OR SOMETHING COMMON LIKE THAT..
IT WAS THE GHOST OF AN ABORTED BABY.

.....

HM...
BUT I'VE NEVER HEARD OF THEM BEING HEREDI-TARY.

IN OTHER WORDS, THEY NEED DEAD CHILDREN TO WORK THEIR MAGIC.
I SEE. WITCHES WHO USE INUGAMI AS THEIR FAMILIARS NEED TO HAVE AN INUGAMI HANDY, WITCHES WHO USE KUDA-KITSUNE NEED TO HAVE A KUDA-KITSUNE, AND WITCHES WHO USE OSHOBO NEED TO HAVE AN OSHOBO.


BUT STILL... IT ALL FITS, DOESN'T IT?
BUT I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW A FAMILY LIKE THAT COULD CONTINUE TO KILL IN MODERN-DAY TOKYO.

YEAH, WELL THE VILLAGERS SAY THAT THE KUONJIS HAVE BEEN KILLING BABIES FOR A LONG TIME.
IT'S PRO-BABLY JUST SUPER-STITION.

Please, save me...
I...

AND THAT'S ALL THE "EVIDENCE" YOU NEED TO ACCUSE AN ENTIRE FAMILY OF MURDER!?
SLAM

IT'S EITHER PERSONAL BIAS OR RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION. HARD TO TELL.
WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO HIM?
YOU HAVE NO PROOF! NOTHING!!

AS YOU SAID, A MAN CAN'T JUST DISAPPEAR LIKE A PUFF OF SMOKE.
BUT THAT SHOULDN'T STOP US FROM FINDING OUT THE TRUTH.
YOU'RE RIGHT, SEKIGUCHI. THE KUONJIS HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF DISCRIMINATION, AND YEAH, THAT'S UNFORTUNATE.
THAT'S ALL I'M SAYING.
BUT YOU DON'T HAVE ANY SOLID EVIDENCE EITHER.
YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH INFORMATION TO MAKE CONCLUSIONS LIKE THAT...
BUT...
S-SOMETHING GOING ON...?
Back then...
IS SOMETHING GOING ON THAT I DON'T KNOW ABOUT?
SEKIGUCHI-KUN, YOU'VE BEEN ACTING STRANGE LATELY.
WELL, THAT'S A BIG CHANGE IN TONE...

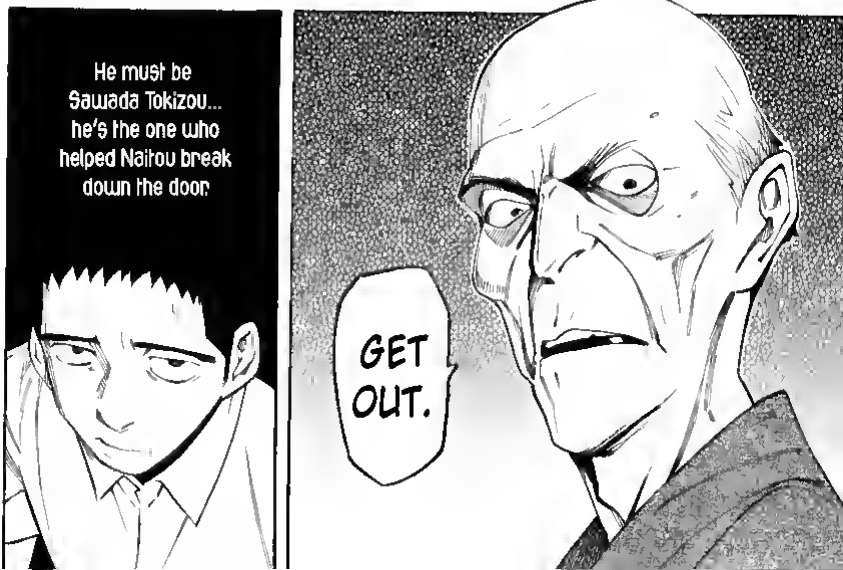
...Will you play with me?
Did I....
Back then, did I...

SINCE YOU'RE SO INTERESTED IN THIS CASE, WHY DON'T WE INVESTIGATE IT TOGETHER?
ALRIGHT!!
SHOCK
But... I want to know the truth...
I don't think Ryouko-san would appreciate having the police involved...
ALRIGHT, LET'S START IN ITABASHI...
THE KUONJI FAMILY'S FORMER SERVANTS, AN OLD COUPLE, ARE LIVING THERE NOW...
THEY'RE STAYING WITH A DISTANT RELATIVE WHO OWNS A DRY GOODS SHOP...

Sign: [Umeya Dry Goods]

J-JUST A MOMENT, OFFICER!
OH, HELLO THERE.
!!
RUN RUN RUN
I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
STOMP

WHAT DO YOU WANT?
YOU'RE NOTHING BUT RUMOR-MONGERING TRASH.
I'VE GOT NOTHING TO SAY TO YOU.


He must be Sawada Tokizou... he's the one who helped Naitou break down the door
GET OUT.

WHAT HAS THE PUBLIC EVER DONE FOR ME?
MY SON FOUGHT FOR HIS COUNTRY, AND NOW HE'S DEAD.
I MIGHT NOT LOOK IT, BUT I'M A PUBLIC SERVANT.
COME ON, NOW, WE'RE NOT JUST A COUPLE OF PUNKS.
T-TOKI-ZOU-SAN...
WE'RE ACTUALLY NOT HERE TO ASK ABOUT THE MISSING CHILDREN...
THE TRUTH IS...
GRUNT
PLEASE, SIR...
WE'RE DOING THIS ON BEHALF OF YOUR FORMER EMPLOYERS
CAN'T YOU BE A LITTLE MORE COOPERATIVE?
GO AWAY.
THEN I HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO YOU
IF THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE...
WE'RE HERE TO ASK YOU ABOUT THE YOUNG DOCTOR WHO WENT MISSING FROM THE KUONJI HOSPITAL

...WHO ASKED YOU TO COME?
THE DIRECTOR, OR HIS WIFE?
RYOUKO-SAMA..!?
IT WAS HER!?
UM, I'M NOT REALLY A COP...
ACTUALLY, IT WAS THEIR DAUGHTER, RYOUKO-SAN.
HUH!? WH-WHAT'S WRONG!?
THEN I DEFINITELY HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO YOU!!
ARGH!!
JUST GET OUT!

Tsuneko's late husband was the cousin of Tomiko's mother so they weren't especially close relatives.

That would have been two months after the disappearance.

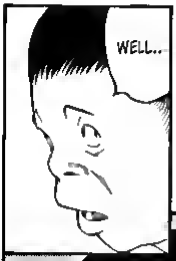
The woman introduced herself as Umemoto Tsuneko

She said that Sawada Tokizou and Sawada Tomiko had come to live with her at the beginning of March of last year

BUT POOR TOMIKO-SAN WAS IN SUCH A STATE!
I WASN'T SURE IF I COULD AFFORD TO TAKE THEM IN.

AT FIRST, I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO!
I'D MET TOMIKO-SAN BEFORE, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW HER HUSBAND AT ALL.

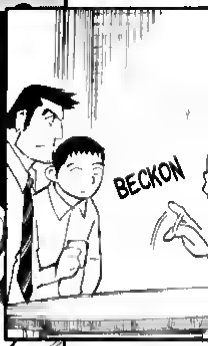
OUR EMPLOYER DOESN'T NEED US ANYMORE.
SHE WOULDN'T TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED, THOUGH.


WELL..

A LARGE AMOUNT?
HOW MUCH?
WELL, THEY BROUGHT A VERY LARGE AMOUNT OF MONEY WITH THEM.
FOR LIVING EXPENSES.

AND, WELL....
AND WHAT?

A MILLION!
A MILLION YEN!

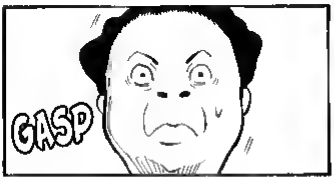

BECKON

BUT WHAT DID YOU DO WITH ALL THAT MONEY?
RELAX, IT'S FINE.
I'LL BE OKAY IF I GIVE IT BACK, RIGHT?
OH MY GOD, WHAT SHOULD I DO...
OH MY GOD... WAS THAT DIRTY MONEY!?
DID I COMMIT A CRIME!?
IT PROBABLY CAME FROM THE MONEY THAT FUJIMAKI BROUGHT TO THE FAMILY...
SOUNDS LIKE HUSH MONEY.
WELL, I USED A BIT TO MAKE SOME REPAIRS TO THE SHOP...
AND THE REST I LEFT TO THE OLD COUPLE.
Hush money..?
But why would the Kuonjis need to pay hush money to their workers?
What were they trying to hide?
SO THEY USED THAT MONEY TO PAY OFF THE EMPLOYEES ..

A KUONJI WOMAN CAME TO HER AID AND DELIVERED THE CHILD.
HIS FATHER'S MOTHER WAS PREGNANT WHEN SHE DECIDED TO GO ON A PILGRIMAGE, AND SHE COLLAPSED IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD.
OH, HIS FATHER WORKED FOR THE FAMILY TOO!
DO YOU KNOW FOR HOW LONG TOKIZOU-SAN WAS WORKING FOR THE KUONJIS?
I SEE... SO IT WAS A DEBT OF GRATITUDE.
SO EVER SINCE, HIS FAMILY HAS FELT INDEBTED TO THE KUONJIS.
THAT CHILD WAS TOSHIZOU-SAN'S FATHER.
TOMIKO-SAN USED TO VISIT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE.
WELL, IT WAS BACK WHEN MY HUSBAND WAS STILL ALIVE SO IT MUST HAVE BEEN BEFORE THE WAR...
...BY THE WAY, DID HE EVER MENTION ANYTHING ABOUT THE KUONJI FAMILY'S DAUGHTERS?
UM...

DURING ONE OF THOSE VISITS, SHE MENTIONED THAT HER EMPLOYER'S DAUGHTER WAS PREGNANT, AND THAT NOBODY KNEW WHO THE FATHER WAS.

That must have been Fujimaki's child !!
The timing is right!


GASP

?

OH, I'M NOT SURE. SHE MOST LIKELY HAD AN ABORTION.
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE KID?
TOMIKO-SAN COULDN'T VISIT AGAIN UNTIL AFTER THE WAR, AND BY THAT TIME, I'D COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN ABOUT IT.

TSUNEKO-SAN, WHAT ARE YOU TELLING THEM?

YOU KNOW WHAT MY HUSBAND WOULD SAY...
YOU GENTLEMEN SHOULD LEAVE.

I'M NOT TALKING TO COPS.
GO AWAY.
That must be Toshizou's wife, Tomiko...
OH, HELLO AGAIN.
RYOUKO-SAN, ACTU-ALLY.
KYOUKO-SAMA?
...THE YOUNG MISS?
I'M SORRY TO BOTHER YOU, BUT THAT MAN THERE IS DOING A FAVOR FOR ONE OF THE KUONJI GIRLS.
HMPH
IT WAS ABOUT NOON WHEN THE YOUNG MISS CAME CRYING THAT HER HUSBAND WOULDN'T COME OUT OF HIS OFFICE.
I FIGURED HE'D DONE HIMSELF IN, BUT WHEN MY HUSBAND BROKE DOWN THE DOOR, THERE WAS NOBODY THERE.
WELL, WHAT DO YOU WANT, THEN?
I WANTED TO ASK ABOUT THE DAY THAT MAKIO-SAN DISAP-PEARED.
OH... UM... WELL...

SHOCK
UM, DID YOU LOOK INSIDE THAT ROOM AFTER THE DOOR WAS BROKEN?
I SEE...
BUT WAIT!
We're not getting any new information
I think you've said quite enough!!
I've forgetten all about it!
BUT DEAR, WHEN YOU FIRST CAME HERE, YOU WERE TERRIBLY FRIGHTENED ABOUT SOMETHING...
I didn't see anything!!
No!! Absolutely not!! I didn't look!!
UM, JUST ONE MORE QUESTION...
That's enough!
My husband will be angry!!
WITH A FROG'S FACE?
HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A BABY...

H-HOW DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THAT?
SLUMP
MA'AM, DO YOU KNOW SOMETHING?

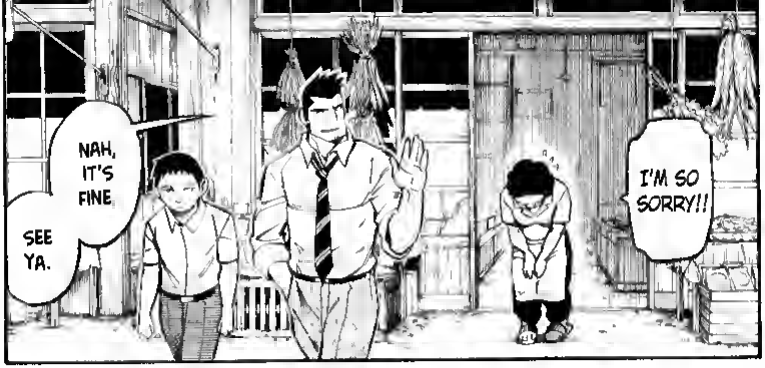
I HEARD THAT BACK IN THEIR HOME VILLAGE, THE KUONJIS ORIGINALLY WORKED AS TAYUU - THEY WERE SORCERORS WHO MADE A LIVING SELLING CHARMS FOR HEALTH AND GOOD LUCK.
AND THEN THERE WAS A TRAVELING PRIEST WHO SET UP SHOP OUTSIDE THEIR VILLAGE AND STARTED CLAIMING THAT HE COULD CURE PEOPLE'S ILLNESSES.
PEOPLE STOPPED GOING TO THE KUONJI TAYUU.
THE KUONJIS DIDN'T APPRECIATE THEIR NEW BUSINESS RIVAL, SO THEY SENT A SPIRIT TO KILL THE PRIEST.
IT WAS SOME SORT OF CHILD-SPIRIT.
BUT THE PRIEST WAS TOO STRONG, AND THE CURSE REBOUNDED ON THEM AND DESTROYED THEIR VILLAGE

"BIKKI" IS A POISON MADE FROM TOAD VENOM.
THE KUONJIS WEREN'T JUST GOOD AT MAKING CHARMS - THEY ALSO MADE MEDICINES.
THEY CLAIMED THEY WANTED TO APOLOGIZE, AND THEY INVITED THE PRIEST TO VISIT THEIR HOME
BUT THEY THEY USED "BIKKI" TO KILL HIM.
SO THE KUONJI TAYUU CAME UP WITH A PLAN FOR REVENGE.

YOU HAVE USED A TOAD TO POISON ME, SO I WILL LAY A FROG'S CURSE ON YOUR FAMILY!
YOU WILL SUFFER FOR GENERATIONS!
AS THE PRIEST DIED A PAINFUL DEATH, HE PUT A CURSE ON THE KUONJI FAMILY.

BUT EVER SINCE, EVERY MALE CHILD BORN TO THE KUONJI FAMILY HAS HAD A FROG'S FACE.
AND THEY DIE RIGHT AFTER BIRTH.
THE KUONJIS THEN STOLE THE PRIEST'S SCROLL OF MAGICAL SECRETS AND USED IT TO GET RICH
AND THEY SAY THAT THE PRIEST'S BODY DIDN'T EVEN ROT AFTER HE DIED

GASP
TOMIKO!!
STOP THIS RIGHT NOW!!
BUT IT'S TRUE. I'VE SEEN IT. THIRTY YEARS AGO...
IT IS A FOLK TALE.
SOUNDS LIKE A FOLK TALE
JUST GO AWAY.
WE DON'T KNOW ANYTHING. AND WE'RE NOT SAYING ANYTHING.


I'M SO SORRY!!
NAH, IT'S FINE.
SEE YA.

She saw a baby with a frog's face thirty years ago?
Could that have been the same memory that Eno-san saw...?

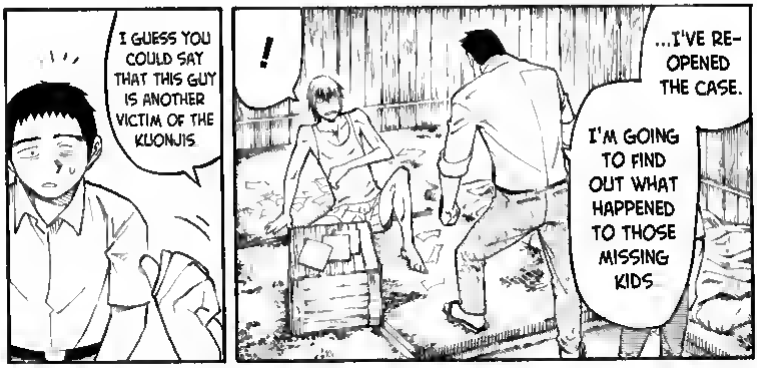
THAT KUONJI HOSPITAL JUST KEEPS GETTING SHADIER.

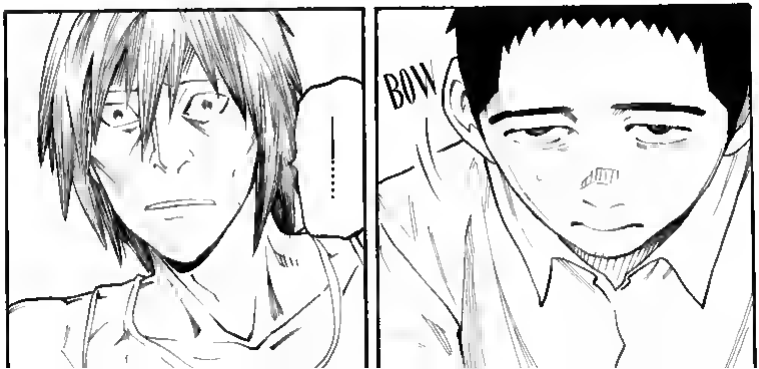
ALRIGHT, SEKIGUCHI, THERE'S ONE MORE LEAD TO CHECK OUT
WE'RE GOING TO VISIT THE FATHER OF THE FIRST MISSING BABY.

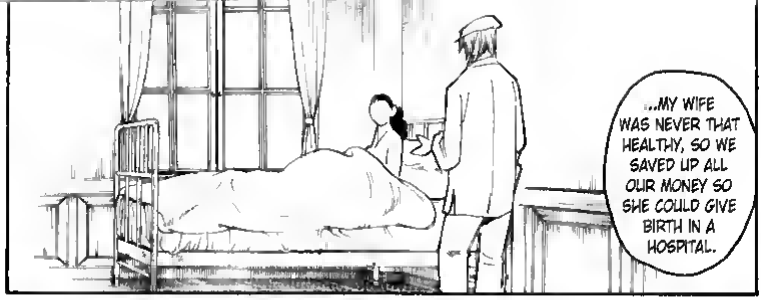
PARDON ME...
ALRIGHT, THIS IS IT.
GASP
FLUTTER
FLUTTER

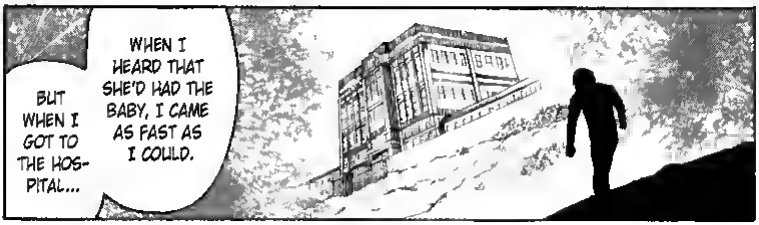
WHOA, THAT'S A LOT OF CASH!
GRAB
GRAB
WEIRD
TH-THAT MAGA-ZINE!!
WEIRD
TOP STORY
SO YOU WERE THE ONE WHO SOLD THE STORY TO THE TABLOIDS, HARASAWA!!
AH

ARE YOU TRYING TO GET REVENGE ON THE KUONJIS!?
OF COURSE I AM! THEY STOLE MY PRECIOUS SON FROM ME!

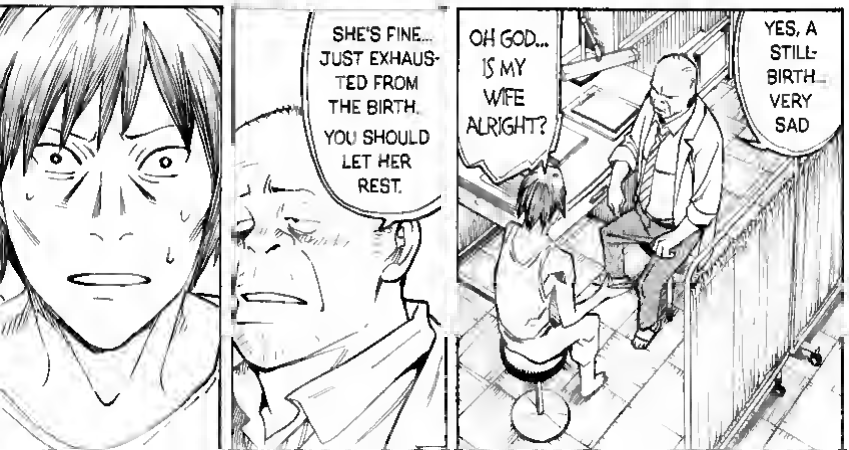

I GUESS YOU COULD SAY THAT THIS GUY IS ANOTHER VICTIM OF THE KUONJIS
!
...I'VE RE-OPENED THE CASE.
I'M GOING TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO THOSE MISSING KIDS

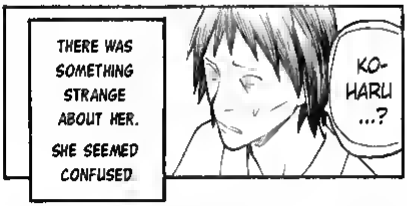

.....
BOW

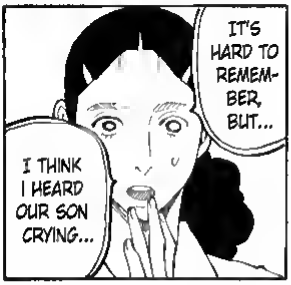

...MY WIFE WAS NEVER THAT HEALTHY, SO WE SAVED UP ALL OUR MONEY SO SHE COULD GIVE BIRTH IN A HOSPITAL.

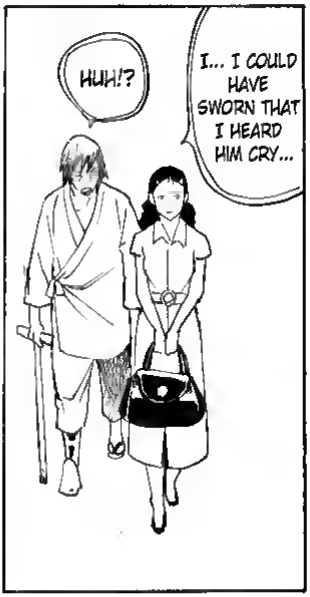

WHEN I HEARD THAT SHE'D HAD THE BABY, I CAME AS FAST AS I COULD.
BUT WHEN I GOT TO THE HOSPITAL...

MY BABY IS DEAD!?
DEAD!?

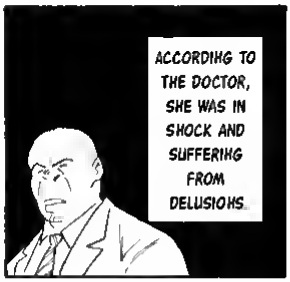

SHE'S FINE... JUST EXHAUSTED FROM THE BIRTH. YOU SHOULD LET HER REST.
OH GOD... IS MY WIFE ALRIGHT?
YES, A STILL-BIRTH... VERY SAD



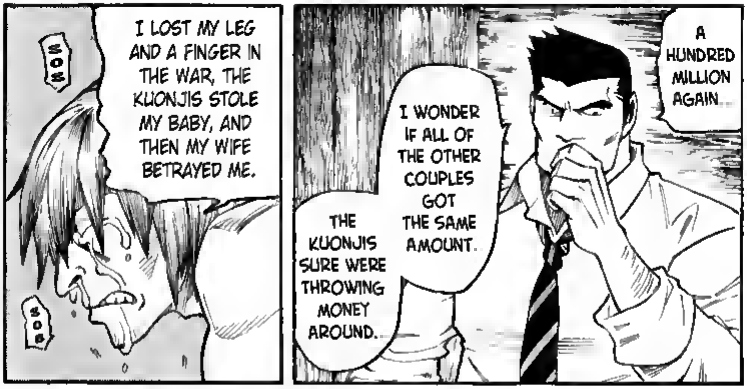


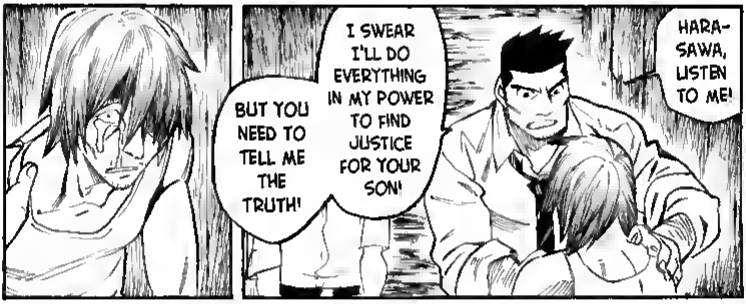


AFTER ANOTHER WEEK, THEY FINALLY DISCHARGED HER



I CAN'T TELL IF THOSE ARE MY SON'S BONES INSIDE, OR IF THEY JUST FILLED IT WITH ROCKS.
I COULDN'T ACCEPT THAT... I ASKED FOR THE BODY SO WE COULD HAVE A PROPER FUNERAL.
AND THEY GAVE ME THAT.
WHAT!?
MY WIFE... SHE SOLD OUR BOY OUT FOR MONEY!
AND THEN KOHARU ...
I FOUND OUT LATER THAT THE KUONJIS HAD GIVEN HER A MILLION YEN!
SOB
AND THEN THE NEXT DAY, SHE JUST VANISHED!
MY WIFE JUST WANTED TO FORGET WHAT HAD HAPPENED AND START OVER, SO SHE ASKED ME TO DROP THE CHARGES AGAINST THE HOSPITAL.
SOB


I LOST MY LEG AND A FINGER IN THE WAR, THE KUONJIS STOLE MY BABY, AND THEN MY WIFE BETRAYED ME.
SOB
SOB
A HUNDRED MILLION AGAIN.
I WONDER IF ALL OF THE OTHER COUPLES GOT THE SAME AMOUNT.
THE KUONJIS SURE WERE THROWING MONEY AROUND.


HARA-SAWA, LISTEN TO ME!
I SWEAR I'LL DO EVERYTHING IN MY POWER TO FIND JUSTICE FOR YOUR SON!
BUT YOU NEED TO TELL ME THE TRUTH!

I RAN INTO A NURSE IN IKEBUKURO...
I... WELL, I JUST DIDN'T TRUST THAT DOCTOR, SO I STARTED DOING SOME INVESTI-GATING OF MY OWN.

YEAH, THAT'S IT.
SHE'D GONE HOME TO TOYAMA FOR A WHILE, BUT SHE CAME BACK TO THE CITY.
!
TODA SUMIE?
ONE OF THE NURSES WHO DELIVERED MY BOY
HER NAME WAS SUMIE.
A NURSE?
WE GOT TO KNOW EACH OTHER REALLY WELL.
WE GOT TO KNOW EACH OTHER.
He had a mole right in the middle of his forehead. he was a healthy little boy
But then...
Those kids weren't stillborn, you know
I gave your kid his first bath and everything.
BUT THEN?

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babies! Wha
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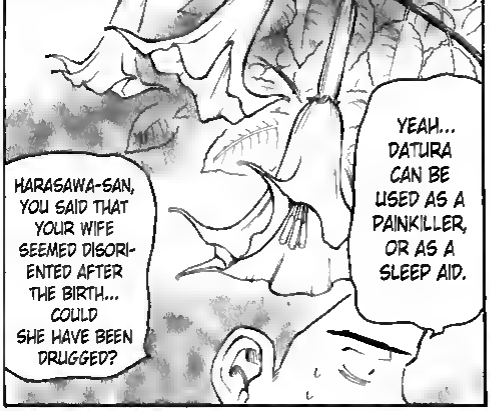
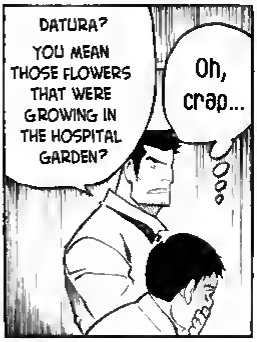
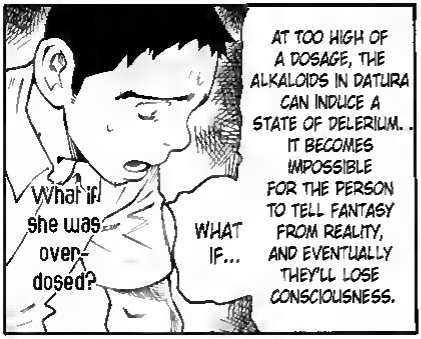
x-crazed wo
Is it a dem

BUT SUMIE DIDN'T LIKE SMALL-TOWN LIFE, SO SHE CAME BACK.
SUMIE SAID THAT SHE AND THE OTHER THREE NURSES HAD EACH BEEN GIVEN 200 THOUSAND YEN AND SENT HOME.
And then each nurse got 200 thousand, so if there were four of them, that's 800 thousand.
That's almost all of Fujimaki's money.
So the Kuonjis gave three million yen in total to the parents of the missing infants.
And another million to the two old servants.
SO SHE WAS AN ADDICT, HUH?
I WONDER WHERE SHE GOT HER SUPPLY
SHE ALWAYS SEEMED KINDA OUT OF IT.
SHE JUST COULDN'T QUIT.
BUT THERE WAS ANOTHER REASON WHY SHE CAME BACK TO TOKYO...
DRUGS.
DATURA!!
FUFU
SHE WAS PROBABLY BLACKMAILING THEM TO GET HER DRUGS.
FROM THE KUONJIS, OF COURSE.


HARASAWA-SAN, YOU SAID THAT YOUR WIFE SEEMED DISORIENTED AFTER THE BIRTH... COULD SHE HAVE BEEN DRUGGED?
YEAH... DATURA CAN BE USED AS A PAINKILLER, OR AS A SLEEP AID.


DATURA? YOU MEAN THOSE FLOWERS THAT WERE GROWING IN THE HOSPITAL GARDEN?
Oh, crap...


What if she was over-dosed?
WHAT IF...
AT TOO HIGH OF A DOSAGE, THE ALKALOIDS IN DATURA CAN INDUCE A STATE OF DELERIUM. IT BECOMES IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE PERSON TO TELL FANTASY FROM REALITY, AND EVENTUALLY THEY'LL LOSE CONSCIOUSNESS.

SO YOU'RE SAYING THAT THE HOSPITAL DRUGGED MY WIFE?
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT... IT MAKES SENSE.

...!!

SO THEY WERE TRYING TO MAKE HER FORGET ABOUT THE BIRTH, HUH?

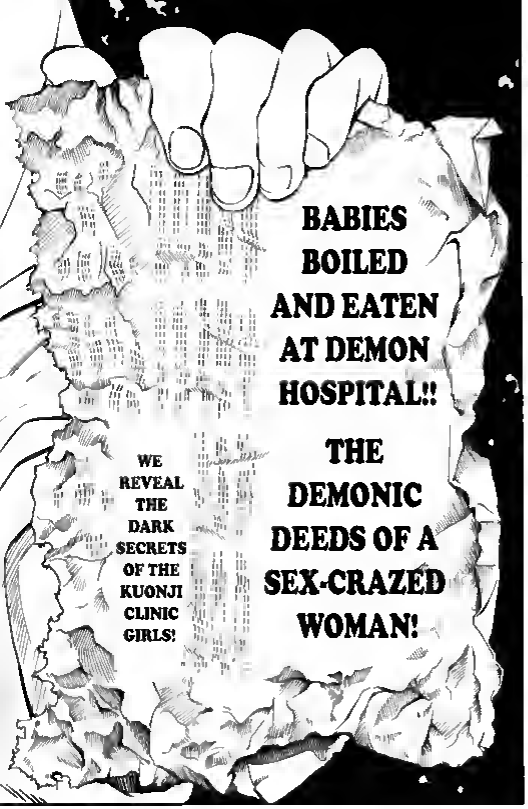
OI, HARA-SAWA!
DO YOU KNOW WHERE TODA SUMIE IS LIVING NOW?
DEAD!?
.....
SHE'S DEAD.
THE LAND-LORD SAID THAT HE FOUND HER DEAD IN HER ROOM.
If she was using datura...
Then it would be easy to make a murder look like an accidental overdose...
MAYBE SHE OVER-DOSED...
.....
OI, SEKIGUCHI, DATURA ARE MORNING GLORIES, RIGHT?
YOU COULD PROBABLY POISON SOMEBODY WITH THOSE...
...HM.

HEY, HARASAWA, DO YOU THINK YOU COULD TELL A JUDGE WHAT YOU JUST TOLD ME?

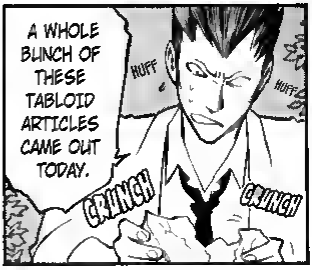
WE CAN MAKE THE KUONJIS PAY FOR WHAT THEY DID.
DON'T LET TODA SUMIE'S DEATH BE IN VAIN.
I CAN GET A WARRANT.

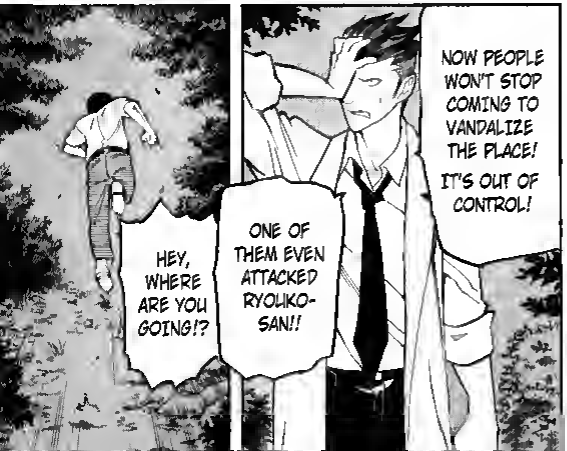
TOMOR-ROW, WE'RE HITTING THE KUONJI CLINIC WITH A SEARCH WARRANT
I'M PART OF THIS CASE TOO... AND THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO CHECK BEFORE THE POLICE GET INVOLVED.
HEY, BOSS, DO YOU THINK WE CAN WAIT ONE MORE DAY BEFORE RAIDING THE PLACE?
HUH?
I PROMISE I WON'T DESTROY ANY EVIDENCE OR INTERFERE WITH THE INVESTI-GATION.
PLEASE, BOSS!
OI, WHERE THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?
SEKI-GUCHI, WAIT!
What am I doing!?
What can I possibly do in one day?

I need to see Ryouko-san...
I need to...
I need to save her...
Please... save me...
RUSTLE
YOU'RE THAT DETECTIVE FROM YESTERDAY!
HEY, DID YOU SEE ANYBODY ELSE OUT THERE?
HUFF
AH...
NAITOU-SAN!?

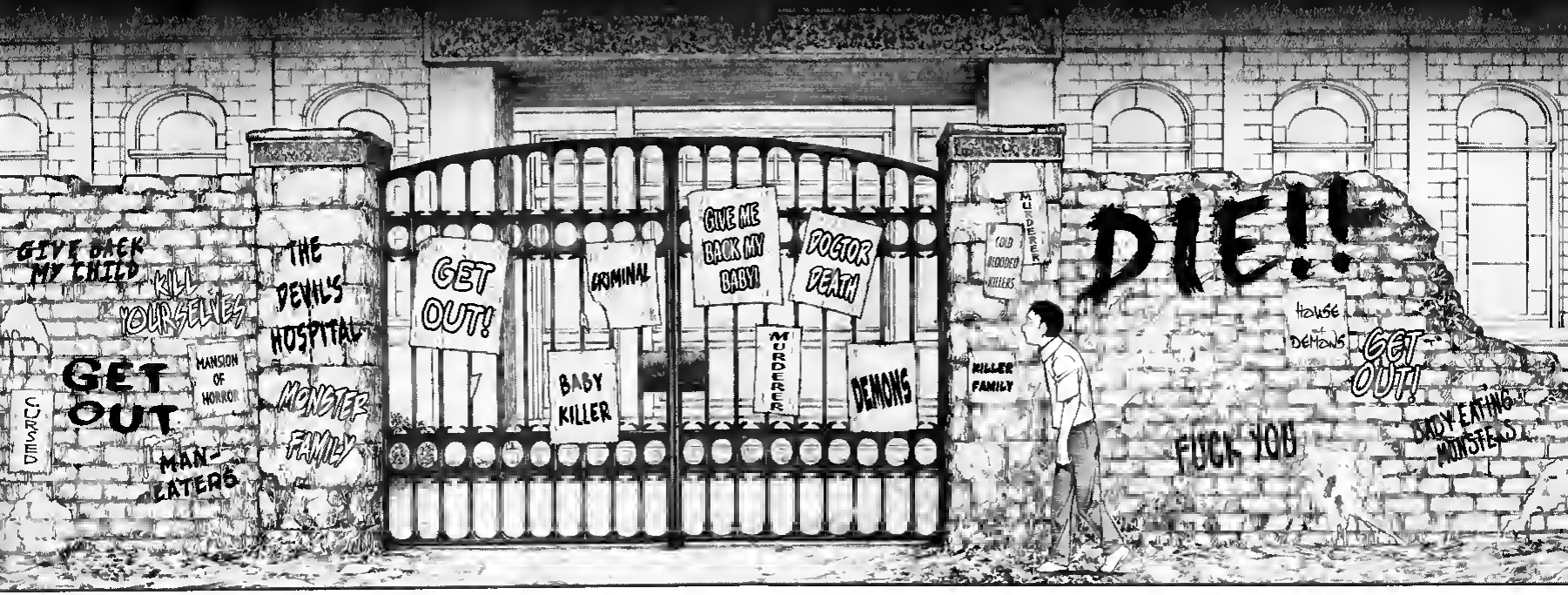

BABIES BOILED AND EATEN AT DEMON HOSPITAL!!
THE DEMONIC DEEDS OF A SEX-CRAZED WOMAN!
WE REVEAL THE DARK SECRETS OF THE KUONJI CLINIC GIRLS!

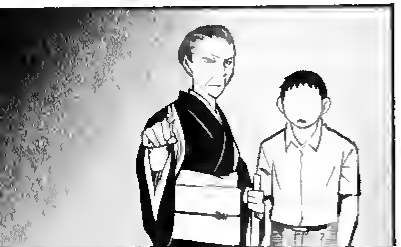
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
HUFF
NO... OR IF I DID, I DIDN'T NOTICE.
DAMN IT, WE HAD A PATIENT COME IN LAST NIGHT TO GIVE BIRTH, AND NOW THE POOR WOMAN CAN'T REST...


A WHOLE BUNCH OF THESE TABLOID ARTICLES CAME OUT TODAY.
HUFF
HUFF
CRUNCH
CRUNCH


HEY, WHERE ARE YOU GOING!?
ONE OF THEM EVEN ATTACKED RYOUKO-SAN!!
NOW PEOPLE WON'T STOP COMING TO VANDALIZE THE PLACE!
IT'S OUT OF CONTROL!

SHOCK


GIVE BACK MY CHILD
KILL YOURSELVES
GET OUT
MAN-EATERS
MANSION OF HORROR
THE DEVIL'S HOSPITAL
MONSTER FAMILY
GET OUT!
CRIMINAL
BABY KILLER
GIVE ME BACK MY BABY!
MURDERER
DOGOR DEATH
DEMONS
MURDERER
KILLER FAMILY
DIE!!
FUCK YOU
GET OUT!
BABY EATING MONSTERS!

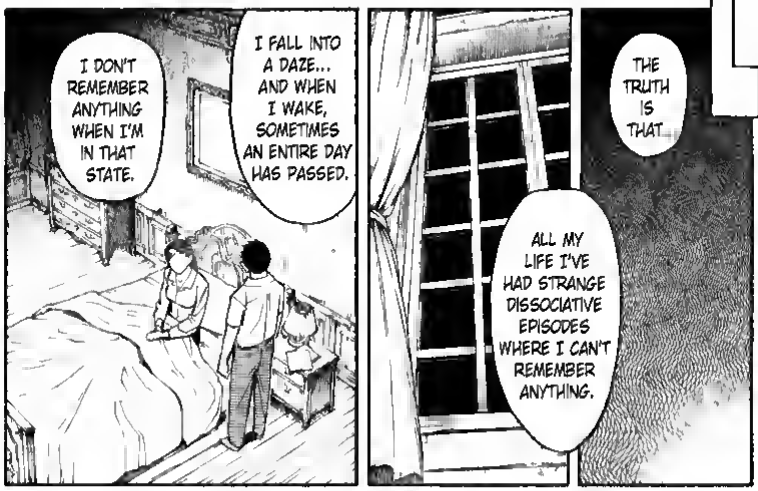


MA'AM, I'M ON YOUR SIDE!
YOU'RE RUNNING OUT OF OPTIONS HERE.
...PLEASE LET ME SEE RYOUKO-SAN.

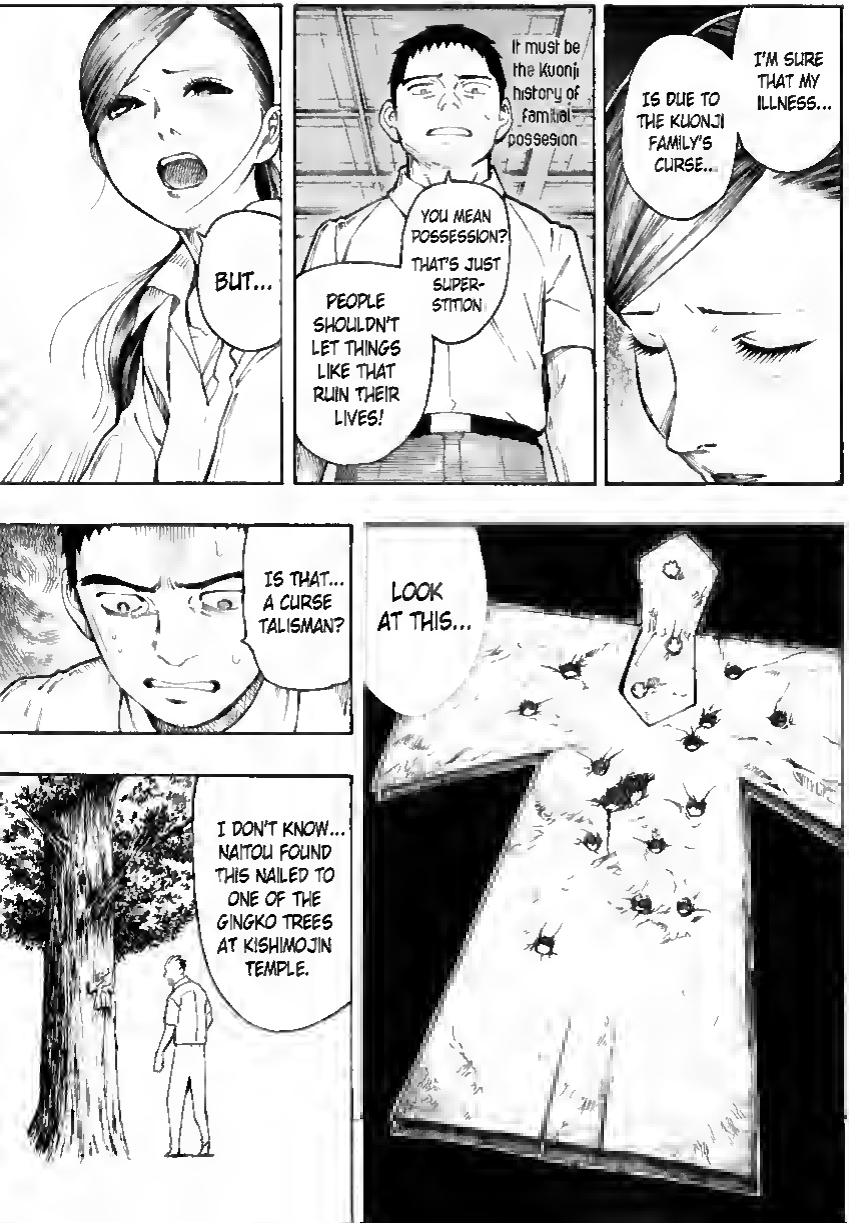
DID YOU COME TO HELP CLEAN UP WHAT'S LEFT OF THIS PLACE?
OR DID YOU JUST COME TO GAWK AT US?

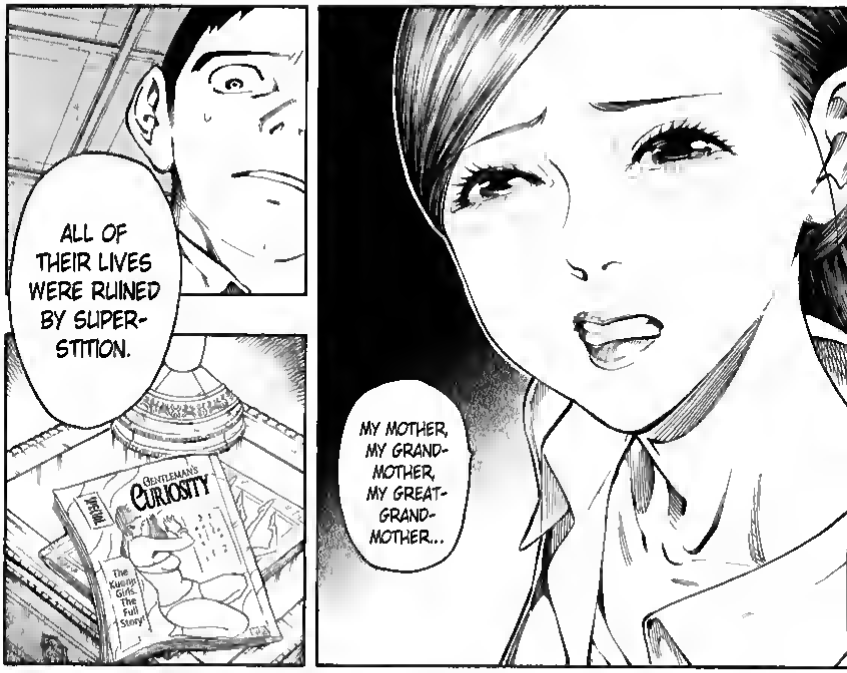
CREAK

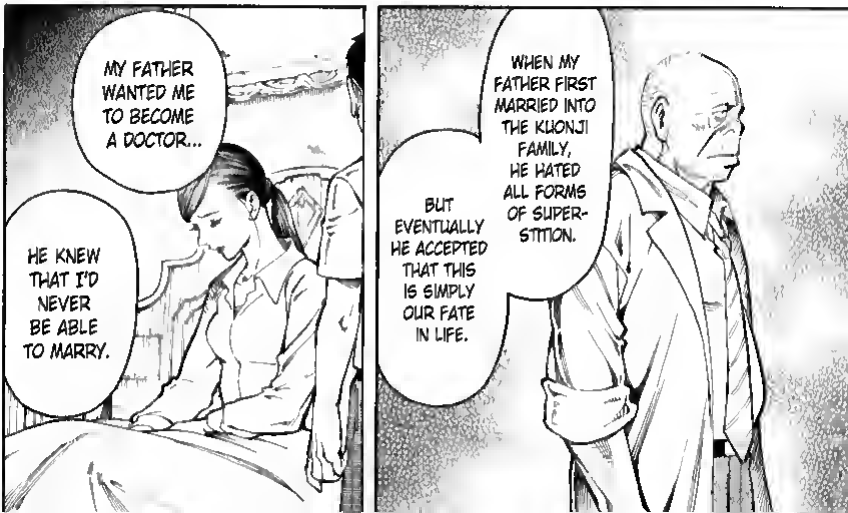
WHAT DO YOU WANT?


I DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING WHEN I'M IN THAT STATE.
I FALL INTO A DAZE... AND WHEN I WAKE, SOMETIMES AN ENTIRE DAY HAS PASSED.
ALL MY LIFE I'VE HAD STRANGE DISSOCIATIVE EPISODES WHERE I CAN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING.
THE TRUTH IS THAT...

PERHAPS I WAS SIMPLY SLEEPING THE WHOLE TIME.
WHEN I WOKE, I WAS IN MY ROOM .. I REALIZED THAT AN ENTIRE DAY HAD PASSED.
THE TRUTH IS THAT I WAS HAVING AN EPISODE THAT NIGHT.


I'M SURE THAT MY ILLNESS...
IS DUE TO THE KUONJI FAMILY'S CURSE...
It must be the Kuonji history of familial possesion
YOU MEAN POSSESSION? THAT'S JUST SUPER-STITION
PEOPLE SHOULDN'T LET THINGS LIKE THAT RUIN THEIR LIVES!
BUT...
LOOK AT THIS...
IS THAT... A CURSE TALISMAN?
I DON'T KNOW... NAITOU FOUND THIS NAILED TO ONE OF THE GINGKO TREES AT KISHIMOJIN TEMPLE.


ALL OF THEIR LIVES WERE RUINED BY SUPER-STITION.
GENTLEMAN'S CURIOSITY
SPECIAL
The Kwanji Girls: The Full Story!
MY MOTHER, MY GRAND-MOTHER, MY GREAT-GRAND-MOTHER...


MY FATHER WANTED ME TO BECOME A DOCTOR...
HE KNEW THAT I'D NEVER BE ABLE TO MARRY.
WHEN MY FATHER FIRST MARRIED INTO THE KUONJI FAMILY, HE HATED ALL FORMS OF SUPER-STITION.
BUT EVENTUALLY HE ACCEPTED THAT THIS IS SIMPLY OUR FATE IN LIFE.

I STUDIED TO BECOME A PHARMACIST FOR A WHILE, BUT THAT DIDN'T WORK OUT EITHER.
BUT MY HEALTH WAS POOR, AND I COULDN'T ATTEND SCHOOL. IT WAS A HOPELESS DREAM
She must know about the datura...
THUMP
So Ryouko-san does have some knowledge of drugs?
THUMP
THE ONLY SOURCE OF HAPPINESS IN MY LIFE...
WAS MY SISTER.
I TRIED TO ESCAPE FROM REALITY BY READING BOOKS...
BUT I SOON REALIZED THAT THERE WAS NO ESCAPE.
Tales of Ise
The Ten Lessons
Old & New Stories
Leaves of Grass
Nature's Poetry
Buddhist Stories
Ghostly Tales
The Tale of Genji 1
The Tale of Genji 2
The Tale of Genji 3
Past and Present
Flowers of Glory
The Case of Mirror

KYOUKO WAS CHEERFUL AND OUTGOING...
MY PARENTS AND I BEGAN TO BELIEVE THAT SHE WOULD BE THE ONE TO BREAK THE KUONJI CURSE...
WE ALL WANTED TO BELIEVE.
BUT NOW, EVEN SHE IS SUFFERING...
THE ENTIRE KUONJI FAMILY IS CURSED...
I DIDN'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT, BUT...
WE'RE CURSED.

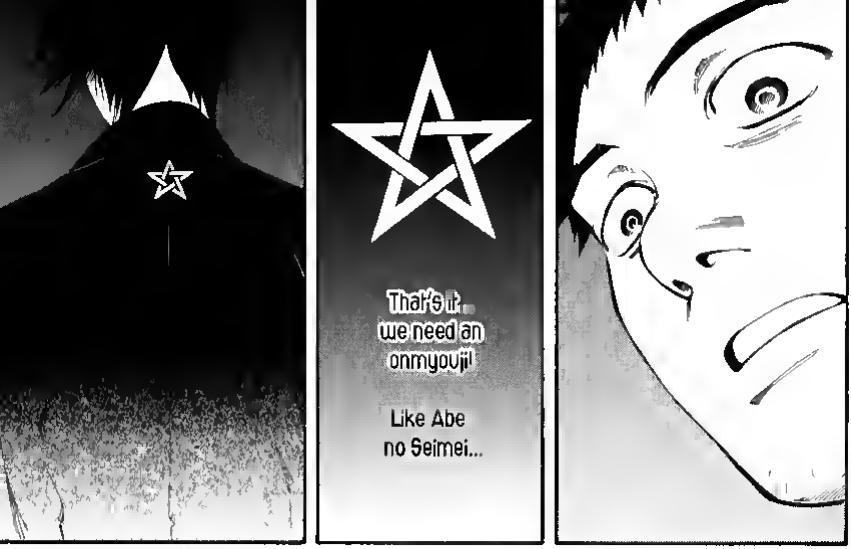
SQUEEZE
SEKI-
GUCHI-
SAMA...

NOTE

Onmyouji were a type of sorceror in medieval Japan.

The most famous onmyouji of all time was Abe no Seimei, who lived in the 10th century.

Seimei's symbol was a 5-pointed star, the same as the one that Kyougokudou uses.



NOTE Kyougokudou is actually a priest of a shrine that honors Abe no Seimei as a Shinto god.

TOMOR-
ROW...
TOMORROW,
WE'LL...
WE'LL
BREAK
THE
CURSE
ON THIS
FAMILY!!

STOMP
SEKI-GUCHI-SAMA!
I'LL CALL YOU TOMOR-ROW!
He can do it.
I know he can do it.
Kyougoku-dou can break this curse!